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This Month's *ENCOUNTER* :—

EDUCATIONAL DILEMMAS

SLIGHTLY paraphrasing Gilbert and Sullivan, the American educationist Arthur Bestor recently suggested the following motto for the American education system:

The Ph.D. who rules the state—
The Ph.D. who cleans the plate—
The Ph.D. who scrubs the grate—
They all shall equal be.

And there certainly is something ludicrous about the litter of new "academic subjects" which American education generates so effortlessly. Advanced degrees in home economics, journalism, television, playwriting, salesmanship, and so on, are not unknown. An Englishman can hardly refrain from laughing aloud.

Nevertheless, he would be wiser to refrain. The English education system, to American eyes, is not really less bizarre. To begin with, there is the fact that, by American terms, it can hardly be said to exist. Eighty thousand college students!—even after allowance is made for the difference in size of population, this is not much more than one-tenth the corresponding number in the United States. In absolute figures, the ratio of English college students to American is a fantastic 1:30. Americans, in any case sensitive to British criticism of their colour prejudice, are fond of pointing out that there are more Negro college students in the U.S. than there are all college students in England—and this despite the fact that there are three times as many Englishmen as there are American Negroes. Who is here the more discriminated against: the black American or the lower-class Englishman?

It is one thing to contrast American colleges with Cambridge or Oxford. The effect is quite different when they are compared with the blank spaces in the British educational structure. Nor is that all. Americans are appalled by the inadequacy of technical education in England; the lack of educational opportunities for women and older men; and, especially, the deep-rooted class bias which Mr. C. A. R. Crosland examines in this issue of ENCOUNTER.

THIS cousinly commerce in guided missiles against glass-houses on opposite sides of the Atlantic is a pleasant kind of game: it is almost impossible to miss the targets, they are so broad. Nevertheless, it is beginning to occur to the participants that perhaps the other fellow's glass-house is not entirely contemptible. In the past years, there have been some tentative movements toward a cease-fire. National pride and national prejudice are receding before the recognition of a common educational dilemma, being explored at its opposite ends in England and America. In the United States, the problem is how to maintain—one might even say, reconstruct—a kind of education that will be of sufficiently high quality to produce an élite, which could set standards of taste and conduct. In England, it is exactly the opposite: how to extend education to the average mass without destroying its present high standards, so adequate (on the whole) for the education of an élite.

It would be nice to think that, high over the Atlantic, there is some perfect mid-point where the two problems would cancel each other out, and quality would be blissfully wedded to quantity. Unfortunately, life is more intractable than that, and such perfect mid-points are rarely located. The American educators, who are under strong criticism in their own country for "watering down" the content of education, retort sharply that, if there is to be a common educational system for all students, then there is no real alternative; and not even their most vehement critics have dared suggest that any kind of class system, even one based simply on differentials in intelligence, be introduced. To some extent this inhibition is nothing more than a taboo derived from the democratic dogma. But, on the whole, it reflects the realities of the democratic situation. Does one, in fact, want to have technologists, scientists, industrial managers, "mass communications" experts, deprived of all intercourse, no matter how intermittent and unsatisfactory, with the humanities and the "intellectuals" who study them professionally? These former will, after

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all, form the nuclei of authority and influence in a modern society; and America has had sufficient experience of the risks inherent in the divorce between sensibility and intellect on the one hand, and experience and power on the other.

Such a divorce is precisely what England is in danger of provoking, unless its educational system is radically revised. The new élites that are now finding their place in the mass-industrialised society that is England in 1956, have, more often than not, not been at a university at all. And, with competition so keen for entrance to the "good" schools and universities, and with admission more and more determined by *academic* ability, it is probable that their sons will also, in effect, by-pass the educational system. The building of a few more technical schools and colleges will, so far as one can see, only formalise a division that is already unpleasantly large. The very idea of a college of Business Administration at Oxford, on a par with the older colleges, will shock many people. But the men (and women, too) who would attend such a college are fated to be our masters, if England is to keep pace economically with the rest of the world. Is it or is it not better for all concerned that they have some experience of the things Oxford stands for—even at the cost of so affecting Oxford that it would no longer stand for precisely those things?

Stated so sharply, this Anglo-American dilemma is insoluble. We cannot, it would seem, have at one and the same time what we need and what we want. True, dilemmas that are unsolvable by logic have a way of being resolved by life, and this one will be no exception. But we ought to have no illusions that it will be easily or painlessly resolved.

NOTES ON OUR CONTRIBUTORS:—

PETER WILES is a Fellow of New College, Oxford. . . . ALDOUS HUXLEY's article will be included in a collection of his essays, *Adonis and the Alphabet*, which Chatto and Windus will publish later in the autumn. . . . BORIS FORD is Editor of *The Journal of Education* and of the *Universities Quarterly*, and General Editor of the Pelican *Guide to English Literature*. . . . C. A. R. CROSLAND's article completes a series of three essays on the subject of equality. These essays represent abridgements of chapters from his book, *The Future of Socialism*, which Cape will publish next month. . . . REV. A. R. VIDLER is Canon of St. George's Chapel, Windsor. . . . HERBERT PASSIN, an American sociologist who has been living in Japan for the past ten years, is ENCOUNTER's Far Eastern correspondent. In collaboration with Fritz van Briessen, he wrote the article, "The Strike at Norilsk," in our April number. . . . GEORGE MIKES is well known to our readers as a humorist and traveller-about-Europe. . . . DAVID SYLVESTER regularly contributes art and film criticisms to ENCOUNTER. . . . STUART HAMPSHIRE is a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. His book, *Spinoza*, which had originally appeared as a Penguin, has just been reissued in a regular trade edition by Faber and Faber.

DWIGHT MACDONALD, formerly editor of *Politics* magazine in New York and more recently a frequent contributor to the *New Yorker*, has come for a year's stay to London. During this period, he will be writing regularly for ENCOUNTER, with either an article or a personal column (sometimes both) appearing each month.

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Peter Wiles

Are Trade Unions Necessary?

A 19th CENTURY politician advised the upper classes to pay "ransom" to the lower classes for the grossly unequal distribution of wealth. This was excellent advice—but it constitutes no case for the payment of intellectual ransom. To wish the poor well is not necessarily to agree with them. Indeed it may be one's plain duty to disagree. The social conscience has claims upon one's purse and one's emotions, not upon one's reason. I shall therefore go ahead to assert that in strict economics there is scarcely any case for the continued existence of trade unions in a fully employed welfare state.

Even in previous conditions of our society, trade unions may well have done more harm than good; modern social history is very sentimental, and handles them quite uncritically. Thus, take the movements for reducing hours of work in the 19th century. We laugh now at the fears expressed by employers and in Parliament, but had they not substance? If there had been no resistance the Labour movement would of course have pitched its claims higher: suppose, then, that hours had been reduced to nine not ten in 1846 or to eight not nine in the 1870's, etc. Now, at each level of national productivity so many hours must be worked to provide a reasonable standard of living and a surplus to finance government activities, capital accumulation, etc. But productivity was much lower then than it is now. So there is no reason to disbelieve *completely* the prophecies of woe with which employers opposed each reduction of hours. There is every reason to suppose that they prevented in each case a *too great* reduction, and that the original Labour proposal would have brought, if adopted when first made, not indeed a disaster but a grave social loss.

The real service of trade unions was to protect the worker against the severe, if petty and personal, oppressions of individual employers. Millions of stories like this one could be told (it is from the *Manchester Guardian*, May 11th, 1956):

"At one place where I got a job I was asked to help the boss to recoup himself as he had made a mistake over an estimate. I agreed. We ripped out a rotten floor and put in a new one in a few hours, working until 9 p.m. (no overtime pay). That job under today's rate of working would take a week. The next morning when I went in at 2 a.m. the boss said, 'I am sorry, there is nothing for you to do.' Redundancy, ye gods! No shop stewards then."

Against such incidents, common in the life of any working man until quite recently, only unions afford protection. The memory of them has burned very deep. It is the lack of ordinary decency and humanity among employers that has saddled us today with the Sinbad of obsolete unionism.

TURN, then, to the present. Perhaps, first, unions are beneficial in that they shorten hours of work? But obviously, in view of Britain's economic position in the world

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market, hours of work are too short already. Shortening of the hours of work did little economic harm when the working week was sixty hours, and may even sometimes have increased actual production; it is certainly not harmless in the 20th century when forty-four hours is the standard working week.

Full employment? But trade unions can only establish *fixed* employment, by making it more difficult for employers to sack labour —and even then they usually also make it more difficult for them to hire labour. This lowers labour mobility and raises costs. Again, trade unions can maintain what we may call unproductive employment, i.e. they can spread the work by resisting the introduction of labour-saving machinery or by making their members spin out the job in hand. These two measures are obviously even worse than fixed employment; indeed from the economic point of view they are simply crimes. The trade unions cannot ensure full employment by seeing to it that there is excess demand, i.e. by raising the national spending power more quickly than the cost of production. This, the only non-restrictive way to full employment, is a matter for the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Bank of England. Trade union full-employment policies simply result in raising costs, i.e. in obstructing technical progress.

What of the superior bargaining power of the employer? It is often said that employers being few, and workers many, the former have a "monopsonistic" advantage over the latter. This word expresses the power of exploiting the other side that is possessed by a single buyer in the market, as opposed to "monopolistic" which concerns a single seller. In general it can be said that no such "monopsonistic" power exists. In any town there are usually many employers of any one kind of labour. Even when there are not, full employment brings about a simple scarcity of certain kinds of labour which gives it an as good as monopolistic bargaining position (e.g. the miners). "Monopsony" occurs only in country places or, where the factory is particularly big, in medium-sized towns. To this extent, the point has substance, unlike the others that are urged in favour of trade unions. But it cannot be regarded as crucial under full employment.

Other common practices of trade unionism are merely restrictive too: demarcations between skills (which make it obligatory to employ two men where one might do), resistance to automation and other advances, and apprenticeship regulations (which delay the entry of juveniles into full productivity and impose unnecessary technical qualifications upon the performance of "skilled" work). These matters should be left entirely to the decision of the employer. If he thinks that his labour would be more efficient if *he* imposed certain demarcations or apprenticeship clauses upon it, then let it be so. If not, not. The trade unions' interest here is only in restriction and not in efficiency at all.

It is vastly significant that many London engineering firms advertise for labour with the words "non-union shop." They do not do this on account of their own political principles but in order to attract labour, i.e. to indicate that there is no ceiling on earnings in their establishments.

The paradox is often urged that trade unions actually increase economic efficiency: the pressure they exert on profits forces the *entrepreneur* to modernise. Well, any pressure on profits may be held with equal validity to do that: taxes, rents, raw material costs, or competition. Why single out trade union pressure for favourable mention? Not, of course, because it raises the price of labour and thus encourages the substitution of machinery: for trade unions are strongest precisely in the engineering industries that produce machinery, and thus certainly do not decrease the price of machinery relative to that of direct labour. In a fully unionised economy like our own a firm must pay more both for its labour and for its machines. Pressure through competition is clearly more desirable since it reduces prices, and pressure through taxes is also better since it is, if not deflationary, at any rate less inflationary than a wage claim. In any case it is not profits *per se* that hinder modernisation; quite the contrary, profits are an obvious

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necessity to pay for modernisation. A really severe cut in profits would stop progress altogether. It is the attitude sometimes engendered by *safe* profits that we want to attack. And this is more a psychological than a financial matter. The American *entrepreneur*, no matter how safe his profits, considers it a professional misdemeanour not to increase them by modernising. We need to Americanise our capitalists, not give our unions the green light for a wage-price spiral. Besides, might they not use this sanctification of their wage demands as cover for introducing new restrictive practices, and how do those square with modernisation?

ANOTHER plausible economic case for trade unions is that they would, by raising their wages, protect those who lag behind in any continuous inflation: the salaried workers—i.e. precisely those who are not unionists and those whose unionisation would do the least harm. But the salaried workers would benefit equally if all other unions were destroyed, so that prices rose less fast. And the rest of the population, whose fixed incomes could not be altered by unionisation (e.g. pensioners), would benefit far more. For, of course, collective bargaining is a potent source of injustice in the distribution of income. It is truly amazing that anyone should suppose this crude, selfish, violent and piecemeal process to contribute to social justice. It is, when we come to think of it, incredible that the building up by some salary- and wage-earners of monopoly power, in greater degree here and lesser degree there, should improve the distribution of income among them all; so incredible that the supposition has only to be directly given utterance to be dismissed.

Nor does collective bargaining much alter the distribution between profits as a whole and wages and salaries as a whole; *nor is it important that it should.* For we come here to that poisonous Marxist obsession, shared indeed by the majority of non-Marxists of all kinds, with the "distribution of the product of industry": how, we all ask, is each firm's revenue divided among the factors of production—labour, land, enterprise, and capital—that constitute the firm? The common answer is that they receive wages and salaries, rents, net profits, and interest respectively; that the owners of these four types of factors of production form separate social classes, or at least that the first class is quite separate from the others; and that the separately named types of income, into which the firm's revenue is divided, are also the most natural, logical, and illuminating categories by which to analyse not only the disposition of the firm's revenue but also the whole national income.

Such a way of thinking had some slight justification in the early 19th century, when broadly speaking the Tories represented rent, the Whigs and Radicals profits and interest, and the Chartists wages; and when there were no social services to add a vastly important fifth class of income, quite independent of economic activities and what the factors of production earned thereby. But even at that time there was the Poor Law and the interest on the national debt, and the identification of the three parties with different ways of getting a living was a gross over-simplification; the salariat, for instance, could not be assigned to any one party. How much more ridiculous is it to go on thinking like that today, when the salariat has expanded at the expense of the proletariat; when special taxes have cut deeply into profits, and inflation into rents and interest;* when social services and national debt interest are a very large proportion of all private incomes.

Yet it is only such obsolete thinking that can give colour to the trade union claim to be working for social justice. So long as the poor, all the poor, and no one but the poor received wages, and the state was economically passive, it made sense to press for an increase in wages by direct economic means. And so long as not all workers were organised, and banks were tough, the value

* And into profits too, since these are always computed for tax and statistical purposes without any allowance for the rise in the replacement cost of machinery due to inflation.

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of money was not threatened. But all that is past now. Below the average wage-earner in the income hierarchy we find the pensioner and the members—adults and children—of large families; and the remainder are by no means so far above him as they were. We can now see clearly what was always the case: *poverty is a function of age more than of class.*

There are six stages of economic man. From birth to school-leaving he is poor, since not only does he earn nothing but he probably stops his mother earning too. Between school and marriage he is rich, earning only to keep himself and probably living cheap at home. From marriage to paternity he is also probably rich, as his wife is earning. Then while his children are growing up he is poor. But from the moment of their entering upon work until his retirement he is rich again. And finally as a pensioner he is poor. What have the trade unions to do with this?

Collective bargaining cannot mitigate these fluctuations in any way. Only insurance and social services can do that. Yet not unwisely (in their own interests) did trade unions oppose state family allowances—as giving the worker an income for which he is not beholden to his union. The unions have not played a very creditable rôle in the genesis of the welfare state.

Nor can collective bargaining hold down profits; for these usually keep pace with wages and the cost of living. Only taxation can change the ratio between wages and profits; and that it does most delicately, hitting the rich man with much profit more than the poorer man with little. Moreover, even if it be admitted that collective bargaining keeps down profits, or increases the general share of wages in the national income, this is not a good thing at all. For it hits investment, since a firm only desires to install machinery if it is profitable, and most of the finance for such things comes either from its own or someone else's profits. And without investment economic growth is slowed down.

Also, high profits mean high and painless tax yields. It is insufficiently known that direct taxation takes about two-thirds of company profits: would wage-earners like to pay those taxes instead? Redistribution, to repeat, whether between rich and poor, or between profits and wages, or—better—according to age and family status, is best conducted peacefully, democratically, and rationally; which is to say by means of taxes not strikes.

Social justice on the one hand demands that incomes be distributed according to need, not productivity; and economic efficiency on the other that they be distributed according to productivity, not need. On what principle, then, is it urged that neither need nor productivity should govern the distribution, but sheer brute bargaining power? All that collective bargaining can ensure is that some workers do better than others—since not all unions have an equally strong monopoly; and that pensioners, children, salaries, rent, and interest suffer from creeping inflation. Nor are rent and interest the least deserving of these five, since they so largely accrue to insurance companies, charities and public institutions. There would be far more justice were there free individual competition in the field of earned incomes, coupled with social services and progressive taxes on unearned and high incomes.

It has been objected that in a unionless economy there might nevertheless be inflation most of the time, though not of course so rapid: how then could wages keep up with prices? The answer is, through the competition of employers for labour. With full employment, rising prices, and rising profits, employers are forced to bid against one another for labour. Wages would only lag behind if the government's expenditure were the prime cause of inflation; for instance, if it kept on pumping new money into the economy to finance an arms drive or a war. In any inflationary race, the government is a stronger player than labour just as labour is stronger than all the other elements in the economy (save only the ordinary shareholder, who gains of course not at the expense of labour but at that of interest- and salary-receivers). But in case of rearmament or war,

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we *want* the government to win: labour like all other elements must accept lower real rewards. It is a very bad thing that unions should in such circumstances keep wages apace with prices, for it means that the government must inflate even quicker to bid any real resources away from the consumer.

We need to look a little closer at the effect of collective bargaining on particular prices. It follows from the general obsession with the "distribution of the product of industry" that when a particular firm or industry does well, it is asked to pay higher wages; so that labour in such places earns more than elsewhere for similar work. Now to some extent that is not wrong, for it is right to attract labour into these occupations, as their greater profitability shows them to be undermanned. Free competition in the labour market would ensure, at any rate, enough wage differentiation for that. But collective bargaining grossly exaggerates this and makes for large permanent differentials between jobs of similar grades. Now, if profits are due to an improvement in technique or an increase in demand the worker has no right to them at all. In the first case they properly belong to the community, in the second they should be divided between the community and the expansion of the particular industry concerned. But how pass on profits to the community? One way, of course, is through taxation. Another, however, is of such blinding originality that the pen seems to leave no mark on the paper: the profits can be used to lower prices.

This is quite normally the combined long-run effect of competition and technical progress, and without it the gravest injustices would supervene. Thus since the Middle Ages there has been great technical progress in the production of wheat, a little in the building of houses, and none in the saving of souls. Yet the relative incomes of farmers, bricklayers and priests have not, after making all qualifications, greatly changed; nor should they have. Bricklayer and priest both benefit from the new relative cheapness of bread. Had the economy been properly unionised all this time, the farmers would have collared all that benefit, and priests would still be on a medieval standard of living. The worker has a claim on profits when he has been working harder or better: for the rest there is no substance at all in the claim that wages should rise with productivity or profits.

The offsetting of the "monopsonistic" position of certain employers, then, exhausts the *economic* advantages of trade unionism. Workers obviously require a factory negotiating committee or, better still, co-ownership, but trade unionism as at present constituted, with its paid officials, its nation-wide collective bargaining, etc., is wholly disadvantageous. If it were abolished, of course, all employers' federations should be abolished with it, just as they arose only in order to oppose it.

Perhaps then there is some *moral* beauty in trade unionism? This may be more briefly disposed of. Solidarity and loyalty acquire any ethical force they may have solely from the end for which they are cultivated. Solidarity with whom? Loyalty to what? To nothing worth preserving, it would appear. A group can be as selfish as an individual. As to the individual, his moral standing is only enhanced by joining a group if he sacrifices some personal interest to it. But British unions offer their members only what is in their personal, individual interests; and only ask for a purely rational sacrifice of immediate to ultimate gain. Thus "join the strike, do not blackleg or you will be put in Coventry"; "pay your subscription so that the officials can get you more money." There is moral beauty in a revolutionary trade union —though we may well prefer to do without it; there is none in an economic trade union. Those who think otherwise must explain why they do not equally admire the National Farmers' Union.

We turn to politics. The closed shop is about the worst threat to liberty in modern Britain—which says much for the degree of liberty in our country but little for trade unionism. It is a terrifying example of the

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moral blindness of this post-Christian, post-Liberal age that men have been driven to suicide because a union sent them to Coventry — without public protest. What grosser tyranny is there than that, in the length and breadth of the kingdom? Again, trade unions are the supreme field of Communist infiltration and the handiest weapon whereby Moscow may do damage in non-Communist countries. Abolish them and what would Communists do all day?

However, the political case is more evenly balanced. There are at least two serious arguments on the other side. First, in a modern industrial society there is bound to be one political party for the rich and one for the poor, if not many divided on approximately those lines. Party finance is a very delicate question. It is essential that all large political parties should have adequate finances but dangerous in the extreme that the State should intervene to ensure this. If, then, at any time the question happens in some way to have been solved satisfactorily, sleeping dogs should be left to lie. Now at present in Britain the party of the poor gets most of its funds from the trade unions (largely, it is true, through the apathy of their members in failing to contract out; but that is a minor matter). Those who would abolish trade unions would have to propose a new "fair" means whereby the Labour Party can survive financially. This I admit I cannot do.

Secondly, trade union leaders are practical men, rendered, in matters other than those discussed above, rational and moderate by the necessity of their careers. They are also important figures in the Labour Party where they wield the card vote. Now the wild men of the Party are concentrated on its political wing; having no card vote, they represent nevertheless the vast majority of active Party workers. But these in turn are grossly unrepresentative of the Labour electorate, which is about as moderate as the union leaders. So in the end the voter is protected by the card vote, which is thus by no means unfair. How then are the wild men to be restrained if the union leaders lose their positions and voting blocks? For this also I have no solution.

Are the trade unions "training grounds for democracy"? Probably in the 19th century they were, but hardly so today. A working man can learn much about democratic action and administration in local government or at Labour Party meetings. Neither of these "schools" of democracy were open to working men in the 19th century. Also the co-operative societies exist, as before, for those who have business ability but left-wing scruples. Rather do the trade unions today soak up active working-class talent that is badly needed in local government, turning its interest and energy from the expansion of the drains to the restriction of production. The political Labour movement must deal in future more economically with whatever talent it has on the local and the national levels; for free higher education siphons off working-class ability into professional jobs, and in the process the son of a working-class family often becomes Conservative. Frustrated ability was ever one of the main driving forces behind the Labour movement. Now that this is disappearing, owing to the increasing equality of opportunity, it should husband its remaining resources.

On the whole and after balancing the pros and cons it looks as if the trade unions should cease to be, in their present form. Certainly we should cease to pay intellectual ransom to them. It is not only a question of persuading the trade unions to be reasonable over this or that. Economic reasonableness contradicts their very nature, their history, and their deepest inclinations. It is not only a question of a national wages policy, of trade union restraint, or of trade union reform. The question is trade union abolition.

ONE should never hesitate to be "irresponsible." A statement that challenges the whole existing order should be made if it seems to be correct. It is not a complete answer to my argument that the recommendation to abolish trade unions cannot be put into practice (except by a Communist government). For that may only mean that it cannot *now* be put into practice. What if,

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gradually, more and more people took the plunge and asked themselves, "Why should we have trade unions?" Not otherwise was Parliament reformed or the Corn Laws repealed: there was simply no intellectual case on the other side. In a reasonable society such as our own happily is, the first step is to establish on which side reason lies. That first dangerous step taken, there is often no end to the consequences.

The charge of "irresponsibility" may be met in a second way. Suppose the theoretical case, grounded in economics and ethics, against trade unionism is conceded. But the thousand political, psychological and sociological reasons for their retention may yet commend inaction to all sensible men. Indeed the writer himself might be persuaded on reflection to join this goodly company. For instance, it may well be that now that the trade unions have inured the working class to restrictive practices,* only these same trade unions, which have made themselves the "natural" leaders of the working class, can wean it away again. Propaganda from any other source would have no effect. Or, again, if unions actually were abolished, and factory committees only were to exist, operating strictly at the local level and with greater moderation, they might soon be captured by more militant and centralising forces. In a short time something suspiciously like the old national unions and nation-wide collective bargaining would have thrust its ugly head through the loopholes of the law.

Then it might well be simply impossible to abolish trade unions. Is it harmful, therefore, to have written like this? Quite the contrary. The unions must be shocked out of their easy consciences. They must see that, at present, their sole justification is social inertia. It is only their prior *être* that is their *raison d'être*, and all the high-flown arguments they use are false. They have no moral *locus standi*, and are but a necessary evil. Give them a bad conceit of themselves, and then they will be more inclined to do their plain duty.

* They are unknown to the peasants that migrate to the towns to form the first cohorts of industrialisation in any country. For instance, most of the early Stakhanovites were ex-peasants.

The Walk to the Sailing Pond

Uneasily I heed the inclination—
I could more easily have heeded long ago—

To walk on to the sailing pond. I look
Where boats are blown across the water by winds
That could not hold them in a calm's embrace
Without, in losing movement, being lost;
Where, when the boats sail in before their eyes,
Abandoning the pond for other frolic,
Children bring my heart beneath their skies.

Nathaniel Zimskind

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Aldous Huxley

Canned Fish

AN ENORMOUS new building had been added to the cannery. From now on, in straight-line and continuous production, six hundred women would daily convert three hundred and fifty tons of frozen carcasses into seven hundred thousand tins of tuna. Today the new facilities were being dedicated.

It was a solemn occasion. A rostrum had been erected on the wharf outside the factory. Bunting flapped in the fishy breeze. Mayors, senators, vice-governors were on hand to say a few well-chosen words. The new cannery, it appeared, was a triumph not only of technology but also and above all of Private Enterprise, of the American Way of Life. It represented, we were told, two million dollars' worth of faith in the Future, of fidelity to the Past, of belief in Progress, of trust in. . . . But listening to eloquence is something I have never been very good at. I looked at my companion, and my companion looked at me. Without a word we rose and tiptoed away.

A friendly engineer offered to show us round the factory. We began with the thawing tanks, into which the ocean-going trawlers discharge their refrigerated cargo. Next came the butchering tables, where the great fish are cleaned, and from which their heads, guts, and tails are spirited away across the street to a processing plant that transforms them (not without an overpowering stench) into fish meal for poultry. From the butchering tables we moved to the huge pressure cookers, the cooling shelves, the long conveyer belts of stainless steel, the machines for filling the cans, the machines for sealing and sterilising the cans, the machines for labelling the cans, the machines for packing the cans in cartons.

So far as tunas were concerned, this was a holiday. The factory was empty; our voices reverberated in a cathedral silence. But next door, in the mackerel department, the work of canning was in full swing. Standing at an immensely long work-bench, a line of overalled women receded into the dim distance. Beyond the bench was a trough full of rapidly flowing water, and beyond the trough were the conveyer belt and, above it, on a shelf, an inexhaustible reservoir of empty cans. From an upper storey, where, invisible to us, the butchering was evidently going on, a wide-mouthed pipe descended perpendicularly. About once every minute a plug was pulled and a cataract came rushing down the pipe. Floating in the water were thousands of cross-sections of mackerel. At breakneck speed they were whirled along the trough. As they passed, each woman reached out a gloved hand and dragged ashore as much as she needed for the five or six cans that she would fill before the next discharge. The cross-sections were rammed into place—a big chunk, a smaller chunk, a tiny chunk, whatever piece would fit into the three-dimensional jigsaw—and the tightly packed can was placed on the conveyer belt, along which it moved, unhurrying, towards the weighers, the sealers, the sterilisers, labellers, and

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craters. I clocked the performance and found that it took from ten to fifteen seconds to fill a can. Three hundred, on an average, every hour, two thousand four hundred in the course of a working day; twelve thousand a week.

Outside, in the hazy sunshine, a dignitary of some sort was still talking. "Liberty," he declaimed, and a second, distant loudspeaker repeated the overlapping syllables. "Liberty-berty."

Once more the plug was pulled. Another Niagara of water and sliced fish came rushing down the flume.

"Oppor-opportunity," bawled the loudspeakers. "Way of life—of life."

BURIED in every language are nodules of petrified poetry, rich and unsuspected veins of fossil wisdom. Consider, for example, the French word *travail*. It is derived from Late Latin *trepalium*, the name of a kind of rack used for dislocating the joints of criminals and reluctant witnesses. Etymologically, work is the equivalent of torture. In English we preserve the word's original sense in relation to obstetrics (a woman "in travail") and have endowed it with the secondary meaning, not of work, but of wayfaring. Journeys in the Middle Ages were exhausting and dangerous. "Travel" is *trepalium*—torment for tourists.

The word "work" is emotionally neutral; but "toil" and the now obsolete "swink" carry unpleasant overtones. It was the same in the languages of classical antiquity. *Ponos* in Greek and *labor* in Latin signify both "work" and "suffering." "And Rachel travailed," we read in the Book of Genesis, "and she had hard labour." Two words for work, two words for pain. Moreover, when Modern English "labour" carrier its primary meaning, it generally stands for work of the most disagreeable kind—compulsory work, as in the case of penal "hard labour," or the heavy unskilled work which is performed by "labourers."

Backward-looking sentimentalists are never tired of telling us that in the Middle Ages, work was all joy and spontaneous creativity. Then what, one may ask, could have induced our ancestors to equate labour with anguish? And why, when they wanted a name for work, did they borrow it from the torture chamber?

Who first invented work, and bound the free
And holiday-rejoicing spirit down
To the ever-haunting importunity
Of business in the green fields, and the town—
To plow, loom, anvil, spade—and, oh! most sad,
To that dry drudgery of the desk's dry wood?
Who but the Being unblest, alien from good,
Sabbathless Satan, he who his unglad
Task ever plies 'mid rotatory burnings,
That round and round incalculably reel—
For wrath divine hath made him like a wheel—
In that red realm from which are no returnings,
Where toiling and turmoiling ever and aye,
He and his thoughts keep pensive working-day.

Lamb was right. In every civilisation work, for all but a favoured few, has always been a thing of hideous dreariness, an infernal monotony of boredom at the best and, at the worst, of discomfort or even sheer anguish. One remembers the description, in *The Golden Ass*, of the animals and humans who worked, while the owner's wife amused herself with magic and adultery, at the flour mill. Men and asses, mules and boys—they were all in travail, all on the *trepalium*, bruised, galled, strained beyond the limits of organic endurance. And the life of labourers in a medieval village, the life of journeymen and apprentices in the workshop of a master craftsman in the town, was hardly less dismal than that of their pre-Christian ancestors. In its beginnings industrialisation merely aggravated an already intolerable state of affairs. The physical tortures imposed in the dark Satanic mills of Georgian and Early Victorian England were worse, because more systematic, better organised, than the travail of earlier centuries. Thanks to automatic machines and labour laws, thanks to trade unions and the internal-combustion engine, thanks to hoists and belts and humanitarianism, there are now few tasks which actually hurt. The rack has been abolished. But the boredom, the frightful punctuality of wheels returning again and again to the same old position—these remain. Remain under free

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enterprise, remain under socialism, remain under communism.

Under the present technological dispensations the opportunity to escape from the tyranny of repetition comes only to a very small minority. But with the multiplication of fully automatic machines, fully automatic factories, even fully automatic industries, the case will be altered. Some of those now condemned to the task of keeping time with wheels will become the highly skilled doctors and nurses of the new, all-but-human gadgets. The rest will do—what? It remains to be seen. Only one thing seems tolerably certain. Owing to the deplorable lack of quantitative and qualitative uniformity displayed by living organisms, the fish-canning industry will be one of the last to become fully automatic. The technical procedures current today will probably be current, with only trifling modifications, a generation from now. Should we rejoice over this island of stability in a flux of change? Or should we lament? In another twenty-five or thirty years we may be in a position to answer.

And meanwhile what will have happened to the raw material of our industry? What, in a word, will the fish be up to? A generation ago the biologist and the commercial fishermen would have answered, without hesitation: "If they aren't overfished, they will be doing exactly what they are doing now." Times have changed, and today the answer to our question would probably be: "Goodness only knows." For in recent years fishes have been behaving in the most eccentric and indecorous manner. Consider, for example, the European tuna. Forty years ago individual specimens of *Thunnus thynnus* were caught, at certain seasons, in the English Channel and the North Sea; but there was no tuna-packing industry north of Portugal, and the main supply of tinned or salted tunny came from the Mediterranean islands of Sardinia and Sicily. Today there is a flourishing tunny industry in Norway.

And the tuna's is by no means an isolated or exceptional case. Fishes which, not long ago, were thought of as being exclusively tropical, are now caught off the New England coast, and fishes once regarded as natives of the temperate zone have moved into the Arctic. The North Sea has ceased to be the great fishing ground of Western Europe. Today ocean-going trawlers, equipped with freezing units, make long voyages to the coasts of Iceland and northernmost Scandinavia. The Eskimos of Greenland have given up their traditional occupation, the hunting of seals, and have taken instead to fishing for cod. What were once regarded as immutable behaviour patterns have changed, almost overnight. The world of fishes is in a state of revolution. Within the next twenty or thirty years the strangest things may happen in that world—with incalculable results for all concerned in the catching and processing of seafood.

This revolution in the watery world of the fish is a consequence of a larger revolution in the earth's atmosphere—a revolution which is changing the climate of the northern hemisphere and is likely to affect profoundly the course of human history during the next few generations or even centuries. The causes of this climatic revolution are obscure; but its effects are manifest. The glaciers are everywhere melting. The snowpack on the mountains has diminished to such an extent that the Jungfrau is now thirty feet lower than it was when I was a boy. The Spitzbergen archipelago, which used to be open for shipping for about four months out of the twelve, is now open for eight or nine. Russian icebreakers and cargo ships sail the once impassable seas that wash the northern coasts of the Soviet empire. In Canada and Siberia agriculture is moving steadily into higher and higher latitudes. Plants, birds, and mammals hitherto unknown in those regions have now made their entrance and may soon take the place of the cold-loving species which are beginning to find their environment uncomfortably balmy.

This sort of thing, we should remember, has happened before, not merely in the remote geological past, but in quite recent historical times. In the early Middle Ages Europe (and presumably the rest of the

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northern hemisphere) enjoyed two or three centuries of most unusual weather. There was enough sunshine in southern England to ripen grapes, and for four or five generations it was possible to drink British wine. Then, about the time of Chaucer, the climate changed again, and for a couple of centuries Europe experienced the rigours of what has been called the Little Ice Age. In Denmark and northern Germany many villages had to be abandoned. In Iceland the cultivation of cereals became impossible, and the fields, in many cases, were covered by the encroaching glaciers. Today the glaciers are in full retreat, and there is every reason to believe that in a few years rye and barley will once more be grown, to the further enrichment of a country which has already profited by the migration to its shores of innumerable fishes fleeing from the increasing warmth of the North Sea.

But if the high latitudes of the northern hemisphere become pleasantly warmer, does it not follow that the low latitudes will grow most *un*pleasantly hotter? There are some indications that this may be actually happening. In Africa, north of the equator, forests are giving place to savannahs, and savannahs are drying up into deserts. And what of the long, hardly intermittent drought, from which large areas of the American South-West have recently been suffering? Is this the usual kind of cyclical dry spell, or does it presage a relatively permanent worsening and arid, or semi-arid climate? Time alone will show. Meanwhile, if I had a few millions to invest for the benefit of my grandchildren, I would put them all into Canada rather than Texas. "Westward the course of empire takes its way." So wrote the good Bishop Berkeley two centuries ago. Reincarnated today, the philosopher-poet would probably turn his prophetic eyes ninety degrees to the right. Westward no longer, but northward, northward moves the course of empire. The tunas, the pilchards, the sharks and codfish—these forward-looking pioneers have already made the move, or at least are swimming in the right direction. In ever-increasing numbers, men will soon be following their example.

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Dwight Macdonald

In Search of Asian History

A Report on a Conference

FROM July 2nd to 6th, some eighty scholars in Asian history met at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies to discuss the agonising problems of their trade. About half of them were British, a third Asians, mostly Indians and Pakistanis, and the rest a sprinkling of Dutch, French, Americans, and Germans, with one Dane and one Canadian. It was the first international conference ever held on Asian historiography, and it came at a crucial moment. The history of Asia has up to now been written mostly by Westerners, either professional historians or amateurs who played some rôle as explorers, conquerors, or administrators (a polite term for rulers); an example of the latter is the extraordinary output of former members of the Indian Civil Service. But now that the nations of Asia have become independent, their history will be written mostly by their own scholars, and from a viewpoint that is centred on Asia rather than Europe. This has its advantages. "I have devoted thirty-five years of my life to the study of Javanese," the eminent Dutch Orientalist, Dr. C. C. Berg of the University of Leiden, said at the conference, "and I can't say I'm successful. I still find it very hard to interpret texts, and I envy my Indian colleagues who can read their texts as if they were newspapers." It also has its dangers. One is that the new school of Asia-centred historians will react—as indeed some have already reacted—against the patronising and even contemptuous attitudes of many of the older Western Orientalists by romanticising their own national pasts and blackening the not very white record of European domination. Another danger is subtler: the very concept of history as understood in the West—that is, a semi-scientific discipline that is distinct from literature, philosophy, theology, and ethics—is not indigenous to most Asian cultures; it was brought in by the British, French, and Dutch and may be swept out again on the tide of revulsion against the West. The conference, therefore, had three general aims: to survey and evaluate what has been written in Asian history, from the earliest half-legendary chronicles to the latest biography of some Indonesian hero in the struggle against Dutch rule; to make the participants, both Asian and Western, more conscious of the nationalistic prejudices of their predecessors, and of themselves; and to get Indian, Pakistani, Ceylonese, Indonesian, and Burmese historians talking and arguing with their Western colleagues. It seemed to me remarkably successful on all three counts.

I say "remarkably" because such intellectual gatherings, aside from the chance they give for personal contacts between sessions,

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are generally a waste of time. The form itself is archaic and ineffectual; after all, we have had printing a long time and most of us take in things better and faster by eye than by ear; and, except for a few spellbinders and cranks, the participants, because of their very number, are unable to express themselves fully or discuss anything in an orderly and thorough way. One reason for things being different here may have been that, to a degree unusual in such gatherings, the conference was conceived and guided by a single intelligence—that of Cyril Henry Phillips, Professor of Oriental History at the University of London, a compact, dark-eyed, clean-cut Welshman who looks like a popular sports instructor in a boys' school and who chaired the meetings deftly and firmly. The idea of the conference grew out of an invitation to Dr. Phillips, several years ago, by the Cambridge University Press to direct a group of scholars from the School in revising the six-volume *Cambridge History of India*, which is still the standard authority although much of it is thirty-five years old and some of it is biased and methodologically antiquated. Dr. Phillips finally decided it would be simpler and more effective to write a new history than to patch up the old one. But one of the things he did before reaching this conclusion was to look into what had been written about the writing of Asian history. He found almost nothing, and it occurred to him that it would be useful to get a number of scholars from all countries to write papers on the subject and then come together to discuss them. A grant of $23,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation underwrote the bulk of the expenses; the School put up another $7,000 or so, and also provided the meeting place. $30,000 is a modest budget for such an undertaking, even in Europe—in the United States it would have cost at least three times that—and was possible only because of careful and economical planning.

THE tasks of the conference were planned with equal care. Indeed, one of the reasons it was successful was that the actual conference was merely a coda, not the main theme, so that one might say the way to have a useful conference is to do most of the work before it meets. The papers, most of which were prepared and circulated in mimeograph months before the actual conference, were the most important part. There are some ninety of them. Some typical titles are: "Modern Historical Writing in Marathi," "The 'Siva Chatrapaticen Caritra' of Krsnaji Ananta Sabhasad," "The Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty 1368–1644," "The Nature of French Historical Writing on South-East Asia," "The Social History of Mongol Nomadism,"* "Modern Vietnamese Historiography," "The Pali Chronicle of Ceylon," "Mill, Elphinstone and their Histories of India," "Some Aspects of Historical Writing on India by Christian Missionaries during the 19th and 20th Centuries," "The Treatment of History by Muslim Historians in Sufi Writings," "Japanese Historiography in the Tokugawa Period 1603–1868," and "Aspects of Dutch Historical Writings on Colonial Activities in South-East Asia, with Special Reference to the Indigenous Peoples, during the 16th and 17th Centuries." These papers are to be published in three volumes, divided, as was the conference, between South Asia (India, Pakistan, Ceylon), South-East Asia (Indonesia, Malaya, Burma, Viet-Nam), and East Asia (China and Japan). "We'll get three good books out of it," predicts Dr. Phillips, "an outstanding one on history-writing on South Asia, about which almost nothing now exists in print, and useful ones on the other areas." The South Asian volume will be the biggest, as the South Asian section, with forty to fifty participants, was much the largest of the three sections of the conference. British scholarship is strongest here, as American is in the Far East; history, like trade, follows the flag.

Months before the conference opened, weekly seminars began to be held at the School to discuss the papers as they came in. They were attended by students and staff

* By Owen Lattimore, the only participant whose name I recognised. It was a most professional gathering, and no effort was made to get publicity, in fact quite the contrary.

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members of the School and by a few others, including five younger historians from India and Pakistan whose expenses were paid out of the Rockefeller grant. Summaries of these discussions were circulated at the conference, and the seminarians (except for the students, who were excluded to keep sessions down to a manageable size) formed an inner circle of *illuminati* who were useful often in giving form to the talk.

The atmosphere at the South Asian session, the one I attended, was pleasant but businesslike. "This is the only hard-working conference I've ever attended," the Danish historian told me. The smooth, low-keyed, informal British style in speaking prevailed; the rasping, energetic American voice was not heard, nor the climatic rumblings of the German, nor the rhetorical flourishes of the French and Italian. There was an interesting combination of discipline and freedom. Sessions began and ended on time often to the minute, and nobody left them to wander in the corridors, possibly because no sitting lasted more than ninety-five minutes, the day's schedule allowing for an hour and a half for lunch and two breaks of half an hour for coffee in the morning and tea in the afternoon (served in an ante-room at sixpence a head). Dr. Phillips kept the discussion firmly in hand, indicating every now and then just what point had been reached and summing up the main speakers' points with a very welcome schoolmasterish clarity. ("No, *no*, Dr. X," he interrupted, with a determined smile, one scholar who had begun a dignified diversion, "We haven't got there yet. We are now on the subject of . . ." And, after an introduction of the problem of objectivity had provoked an increasingly arcane series of philosophical flights: "I think some of our difficulties are arising because of epistemological theories that are not being stated. We cannot possibly settle these questions. I suggest the way to get at them is by comment on specific historical works. Does anyone want to speak to that?") In spite of the chairman's chairmanship, things often got out of hand, the occupational disease of conferences being the *non-sequitur*. Someone asks which general approach to history the new school of Asian scholars will follow—will it be oriented to the European tradition or to the Asian? Marxist or non-Marxist? To which a Belgian savant replies with a résumé of the peculiar linguistic situation in the country of his speciality. Someone else gives a fifteen-minute presentation of the problem of propaganda—no papers were read, since they had already been sent to all participants—to which the first response is a lengthy and brilliant discourse on the mythology of science.

LIKE a good games master, Dr. Phillips encouraged as well as controlled his charges. He permitted a great deal of cross-discussion, which is usually repressed by the chairman but which often turns up the most interesting material. And before allowing things to move along, he generally asked, "Has anyone else anything to add on this point?" Quite often, no one did. It seemed there was enough free speech to go around; no one simmered and glowered with intellection for which there was no outlet. This plethora of free speech was partly due to the remarkable amiability of the sessions; it is when the battle lines are drawn and everyone wants to get in a blow for his side that speaking-time becomes a scarce commodity. The sharpest rebuke I heard was: "Dr. X does not appear to have read my paper very carefully." There was some polite friction between some of the Asian participants—Indian v. Pakistani, older v. younger men—but there was no visible division along East-West lines. Both sides, in fact, seemed to be leaning over backward to avoid conflict. Thus several of the most important British papers, including Dr. Phillips', analysed critically the writings of British historians on India, while papers by Asians often disparaged the past writings of their own fellow-countrymen. "I was pleasantly surprised at the measure of agreement between the Asians and the Europeans," one of the organisers of the conference told me. "The Asian delegation was not hand-picked—we invited the outstanding men. We did exclude a few extremists, not because of their views but because they would

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have used the conference as a platform to sound off. We didn't ask any Chinese historians because it would have had to be a government-sponsored delegation, and we saw no reason for wasting time on official views. The Russian delegation at last year's Rome conference of historians didn't make a very impressive contribution." The good-fellowship perhaps went a little too far. I thought it odd, and disappointing, for example that no one mentioned either K. M. Pannikar's important and controversial book, *Asia and Western Dominance*, or the question of the India Office Library.*

The most acute problems of Asian historiography, to judge by the papers and the discussion, arise from the nature of Asia itself, and of the Asian cultural tradition. "That part of the world which goes by the name of Asia," François Bondy observed in the January 1954 ENCOUNTER, "has no real coherent existence—it is a geographical but not a cultural unit. . . . The concept 'Asia' is a figment of the Western mind which has little connection with reality." The formlessness, indeed the impalpability of "Asia" makes the historian's task very difficult; the subject tends to break up into myriads of small units whose historical continuity is brief, which have little relation with each other, and whose languages are unbelievably diverse and plentiful. In the West, there are a few well-defined nations, most of them with long and continuous pasts. It is possible to speak of "Europe" because the score of nations composing it have been interrelated for a great many centuries, so that a French schoolboy will as a matter of course learn a good deal about Italy and Germany, since each figures largely in his own country's history. But there is no such close connection between even the largest of Asia's divisions; at the conference, for example, the ignorance of Indian historians about Chinese history was deplored. Furthermore, not only is "Asia" a dubious concept, but it seems one can hardly speak of "India" or "Indonesia" either. There are fourteen official languages in the former and Heaven knows how many unofficial ones; there are estimated to be about 250 different languages spoken in the latter. For the literate Indian, the *lingua franca* is English; and, while some scholars with strong nationalist convictions write in one of the native languages, this is a sacrifice; to gain the maximum readers, one must write in English. This importation of the West in order to give some coherence, some common denominator to Asian culture,

* This is undoubtedly the largest and richest collection of material on Oriental history in the world. It contains the archives of the East India Company and of the Government of India that succeeded it, together with a vast amount of historical records, some very ancient, accumulated by British officials in India, Africa, China, Burma, and the Middle East (since the scope of both the Company and the Government of India extended far beyond India). The collection is now in London, as it has always been, but Mr. Azad, the Indian Minister of Education, some months ago made a well-publicised, though unofficial, demand that it should be turned over to India. There are no present indications it will be. Dr. Phillips, who is an advisor to the Library (as well as a member of the India Historical Records Commission set up by the Nehru government), thinks the Library should stay in London for several reasons: if it were returned to India, it would have to be divided between Pakistan, India, and Burma; it contains the personal collections of British viceroys and officials turned over by their families, which, also, would have to be split off; many, perhaps most of the rare books and manuscripts collected in the East by British officials would have perished if they had not been sent to London (like the argument made for retention in the British Museum of the Elgin Marbles); the Library is open to scholars of any nationality —all the material before 1902, that is; and the Indian Government is as insistent on later material not being opened to investigation as the British are, there apparently being skeletons in everybody's closet—and there is an efficient mail-loan service by which books and manuscripts are promptly sent to borrowers in any part of the world. He also points out that, since a duplicate of every official document was deposited in Delhi, the Indians now have three-fourths of the Library's material anyway, in bulk if not in quality. At the conference, I asked a number of the Indians what they thought; the general reaction was that it was a question for the two governments to settle between them. No one seemed to feel deprived, professionally, by the Library's present location in London.

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appears in the very names that are generally accepted, by Oriental as well as Western historians, for the main periods of Indian history. German scholars in the last century divided it up into the Classical, the Medieval, and the Modern periods, and the names have stuck. There is even a Reformation and a Counter-Reformation! "We have turned to our Classical age for inspiration," said one of the Indians at the conference, "just as you did in the Renaissance." He meant the pre-Muslim period, which is clear (if awkward) enough unless, as has been done, the Muslim Conquest is equated with the Norman Conquest. (A 19th century Bengali wrote lives of Mazzini and Garibaldi and proposed an all-Indian *carbonari* movement.) Dr. Takdir Alistahbana of the University of Indonesia summed it up very well at the Rangoon Conference on Cultural Freedom* in 1955: "British culture, and Italian and German and French, are only variations of a single type. German idealism has its parallel in England, just as English empiricism had its parallel in France. Currents of thought such as socialism, impressionism, and existentialism belong to the whole of Europe . . . but Asia is living in thirty different centuries at the same time."

TRADITIONALLY, the Asian consciousness has been a-historical, one might almost say anti-historical. The miracle of a Thucydides, writing history twenty-three hundred years ago with an objectivity and sophisticated discrimination that might be called "modern" were more of our own historians able to achieve it, never took place in Asia. "History" was eulogies of ruling princes, was propaganda for the *status quo*, was tales told to point a moral, was magic, cosmology, poetry, legend, ritual, was anything except an accurate account of what had happened. Such trivialities could not be expected to interest cultures shaped by anti-worldly religions like Buddhism and Brahmanism. As Dr. Prasad of Patna University, India, observed at the Rangoon Conference: "The Asian mind has always thought in terms of God, the other world, reincarnation, deity, rebirth, life after death, *Karma*, etc. . . . The Asian angle of vision is oriented neither by history nor by science but my mythology; not by fact but by myth. For the Indian masses, Shiva, Rama, and Krishna are more real and powerful than Asoka or Akbar or even their own selves." With the important exception of China, where beginning with the Han dynasty in the 2nd century B.C. court historians did compile "annals" which were at least accurate however limited in scope, Asia offers the historian plenty of mystery but very little information. "I am inclined to think," stated Dr. Berg, of Leiden University, "that the main theme of Mon and Javanese historiographers is to explain the divine qualities and functions of the king by establishing the line of their descent and their identity with some king of Heaven. The result is that no attention is given to foreign countries even in a case of conflict, nor to such practical aspects of life as economic problems and social conditions." Dr. H. L. Shorto, another participant, describes the Mon *Weltanschauung*:

> The periodical incursions of Burmese, Shans, and others are on a par with the activities of demons and natural disasters, as elements in a hostile environment through which the nation is preserved by the king's *anubhaw* and *trijah*, the power derived from spiritual attainments and magical objects respectively. . . .
>
> The world picture is that of the continuing institution of the Mon nation, brought into being by a miraculous genesis which, like the Biblical creation, sets the beginning of relevant time, and renewed at the times of greatest disaster by further supernatural interventions. The nation is literally summed up in the king; relations between states are a matter of embassies, when the fate of a whole people depends on the king's ability to give a wise or witty answer. . . .
>
> This concept of the world as a stasis is diametrically opposed to what we would regard as the essential precondition of any history at all.

Mon was an ancient kingdom bordering on Burma, and its historians, while perhaps a

* The proceedings of this Conference have been published in a book, *Cultural Freedom in Asia* (Charles E. Tuttle Company, Vermont, U.S.A. and Tokyo, 1955).

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little extreme in their other-worldly orientation, were by no means atypical. Their general attitude was prevalent among the history-writers of South and South-East Asia right up to the last century, and the lamentations of modern historians make sad reading.

"The Indologist when dealing with periods not illuminated by inscriptions, must be satisfied with 'certainties' which, in other fields, would hardly be accepted as probabilities. The materials he works with are badly dated, vague, and sometimes thin to the point of fragility. . . . On such shaky foundations, great scholars have reared scaffoldings on which we climb with our eyes closed." These words of the Belgian scholar, Louis de la Vallée Poussin, who in the last century wrote the standard history of pre-Muslim India, are echoed by the plaint of the contemporary historian, H. C. Raychaudhuri, whose *Political History of Ancient India* is used as a text in all Indian universities: "The Cimmerian veil of darkness that enshrouds not a few obscure spaces in the spectrum of the early history of this country cannot be lifted by the wand of the magician or the trick of the conjuror." The same note was struck again and again at the conference and in the papers prepared for it. Although *Itihasa* (history) was sacrosanct in Hindu culture as the fifth Veda, the concept was quite different from ours, the prosaic recording of events being inextricably mixed up with richer and loftier matters, and the very calendar being ordered philosophically rather than in time-sequence:

> History was just a means to an end but not an end in itself. *Itihasa* means past events accompanied by or arranged in the form of stories and conveying instructions in *dharma* (morals), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (desire), and *moksa* (salvation)—the four ultimate ends of a human being.
>
> Human affairs, which include the rise and fall of empires, are just parts of a cosmic order, and the chronological framework, therefore, is not in terms of "years" but of "ages".
>
> (A. K. Narain, Banaras Hindu University.)

Observing that "Indians of the past, despite their high intellectual attainments, lacked the historical spirit," K. K. Pillay (Madras University) describes an 8th century account of the Sangam, a celebrated Tamil literary academy, that "speaks of three successive Sangams which lasted altogether for 9,000 years" and were staffed by 8,598 poets, including a number of gods. "On the face of it, this account is incredible," concludes Dr. Pillay, and one is forced to agree with him. Reluctantly, however, for what some of these ancient chronicles lack in accuracy, they more than make up in imagination and even good sense. As an essay in the genesis of social institutions, Dr. A. K. Warder's summary of the ideas of the early Buddhist record-makers is as intellectually satisfying as similar efforts by 19th century socialists, utopian or scientific:

> At the earliest stage of society, when all its members were morally perfect, there had been no state or kinship, no sex or marriage, no property, no work, no caste, no war, no old age or disease. The earth itself consisted of a delicious edible substance; at first, no one touched it, but after a time it was tasted and found enjoyable, whereupon all took to eating it. Their bodies then became coarser. Meanwhile, the edible substance disappeared but was replaced by edible fungi and eventually by edible plants. The distinctions of sex then developed in their coarsened bodies and sexual passion and intercourse began. Afterwards, it was discovered that food (rice) could be stored. As soon as this was done, there was a shortage of rice. The land was then divided into private holdings to ensure fair distribution, but as a result of this theft was invented. To maintain the moral order, a man was elected king. Thus the institutions of civilisation are accounted for. . . .
>
> Elsewhere, the evolution of society is associated with a progressive shortening of human life. The original life-span was 80,000 years. When poverty first became widespread, and as a result of it theft and murder, the span was shortened to 40,000. Afterwards, lying, adultery, and other immoral behaviour resulted in further reductions, until the present span of 100 years was reached. The process will continue until even the word *kusala* ("good" or "moral") will no longer exist. Eventually it will be reversed as a result of the rediscovery of the advantages of mutual co-operation as an alternative to mutual destruction.

ALTHOUGH the Muslims who ruled India during her "medieval" period had a more highly developed historical sense than the Hindus, even their history-writing

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leaves much to be desired by Western standards. The supernatural is on much too intimate terms with history for the researcher's peace of mind.

> In the last resort, Indo-Muslim historiography is providential [Dr. P. Hardy, of the School of Oriental and African Studies, writes in his paper]. Muslim historians view history as from a rearward railway observation car. They do not see where they are going nor do they presume to know, but looking back they see their journey as running on straight lines in one direction toward the present. They assume that the only significant history is of the *'umma* [the Muslim religious community] and that in what the *'umma* has done, God's hand is to be seen. History is purposeful and directed, though by other than human hands.

Nor are the Muslim historians free from the common vice of Asian historians—a respect for royalty so great it would be servile were it not so evidently a wholly unconscious assumption. Thus Abul Fazal, an important Muslim historian, describes how he wrote his history of the reign of Akbar:

> I obtained the chronicle of events beginning with the nineteenth year of the Divine Era, when the Record Office was established by the enlightened intellect of His Majesty.... Their sacred contents yielded much material for the sublime volume.... I begged the correction of what I had heard from His Majesty who, by virtue of his perfect memory, recalls every recurrence in gross and in detail, from the time he was one year old till the present day, the dawn of Fortune's morning. Etc....

Things seem to have been even worse in South-East Asia. The French had to bring into Viet Nam the very concept of historiography, as the Dutch into Indonesia, and the production of scholarly historical works in those countries by non-Europeans is still extremely small. (In contrast to India, where in the last hundred years a number of important Indian historians have arisen—two of them, Dr. Majumdar of Nagpur University and Dr. S. N. Sen of Calcutta University, played a prominent part in the conference.) "One would be completely at a loss for a picture of the past if one had to confine one's self to Indonesian 'historiography,'" Dr. C. Hooykaas writes. "A considerable number of facts are known but their chronology is so uncertain that it seems wiser not to raise expectations by using the word 'history' and to content ourselves with the more modest term of past.'" There is such a shortage of dates—a useful commodity which historians of the West take for granted, like air and water—that the Indonesian historian is driven to all sorts of shifts, such as studying potsherds of Chinese porcelains, which *can* be dated; archæology, of necessity, must be called on for evidence of the fairly recent past, as if the date of Valley Forge or the Norman Conquest had to be established by examining buried cups and spoons. Place is as shadowy as time. Dr. J. G. De Casparis, who teaches history in Indonesia, describes this painful situation:

> Almost nothing definite is known [about the more remote history of Indonesia]. We have theories rather than facts. A university teacher may explain to his students that Cho-po, frequently mentioned in Chinese sources, represents Java according to Coedes, Sumatra according to Ferrand, a part of the Malay peninsula according to Moens, and Western Borneo according to Braddell. Students will smile and ask the teacher which of the above opinions is correct. If they do not get a clear reply, they will ask again why the history of their own country is so very different from European history, a question which may put the teacher in a difficult position.

The difficulty of the position is that while, for obvious reasons, almost all the historians of Indonesia have been Dutch, for equally obvious reasons the native students are suspicious of their theories. The question of objectivity in writing history is, at present, sharpest in Indonesia. One of the Indonesians at the conference, Dr. Bambang Utomo, after describing the tendentious nature of current historiography in his country—the pre-Dutch past is uncritically romanticised, the period of Dutch rule blackened in equally sweeping terms—poignantly expressed the dilemma this poses for a scholar who is also a patriot:

> We would like to stress the importance and necessity of such efforts to increase the number of Indonesians supporting the nationalist idea. Because only thus can its fight against colonialism and for a better future be quickly brought to a successful end.
>
> Since the functional [i.e. propagandistic]

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character of modern Indonesian historiography has been shown, one may not expect that [it is] solely directed by the search for truth. In fact, we can observe that the desire to produce nationalistic literature is almost always stronger than the desire to conform to scientific standards....

Up to this day, our historiography has not produced contributions to the science of history. No Indonesian has yet reported discoveries of new facts or unknown documents or new interrelationships between already known facts or events. All the knowledge of the above-mentioned authors is based on Dutch literature or traditional literature that has been made accessible by Dutch scholars.

HERE India presents a dramatic contrast to Indonesia. Although, as Dr. Majumdar writes, "historiography was practically unknown to the Hindus at the beginning of the 19th century," it developed rapidly under British rule. (A current instance is the *History and Culture of the Indian People*, a ten-volume project, of which four have appeared, edited by Dr. Majumdar and begun since independence.) While the Indonesians look back at the centuries of Dutch rule with unmixed resentment, the Indians and Pakistanis are more ambivalent. In *Asia and Western Dominance*, Dr. Pannikar writes of the British in India with moderation and even at times appreciation, but observes, "It is difficult to speak with restraint about the Dutch system in Indonesia," quoting Coen, the founder of Batavia: "May not a man in Europe do what he likes with his cattle? Even so does the master here with his men. . . . The law of this land is the will of the king, and he is king who is strongest." The British not only made some effort to introduce relatively democratic institutions into India—relative, that is, to what had been before—but, perhaps more important, from the middle of the last century increasingly brought Indians into the machinery of government, notably into the remarkably honest and efficient Indian Civil Service, and also tried to spread Western ideas through education. The Dutch made almost no such effort to associate the Indonesians with their rule and culture; between 1920 and 1940 about one hundred Indonesian students went to Dutch colleges—the comparative figure for Indian students educated in England must be many times greater; a Dutch scholar estimates that in their colonial system, the Dutch used ten times as many of their nationals, per million natives, as the British did in India. All of which explains why one sees so many Indians and Pakistanis on the streets of London, and why the tone of the conference, centring as it did on South Asia, was so amicable.

Whatever the attitude of the new nations of Asia toward their former Western rulers, however, it will be some time before they become culturally, as well as politically, independent of the West. Dr. Pannikar, who cannot be accused of subservience to the West, has a striking passage on this point:

This cult of the nation required in many cases a new historical background, for without a common history a nation cannot exist. In many Asian countries, especially India, such history with a national purpose seemed hardly to exist.... The material for the writing of Indian history was provided by the work of European scholars. Even more striking is the case of Indonesia, where a few European scholars, mostly Dutch, reconstructed from inscriptions the history of the great empires of Java and Sumatra which provided Indonesian nationalism with a solid historical base. In this sense it cannot be denied that European scholars and thinkers, by their labours in the interests of knowledge, enabled India, Ceylon, and Indonesia to think in terms of historic continuity.

Nationalism is also a pride in cultural achievement.... No one had to tell the Indians, Chinese, and Japanese about the richness of their inherited culture.... But the rationalisation of this belief at the present time is due to the recovery and interpretation of the culture of India and China by Western scholars.... In fact, while resistance to the political domination of Europe provided the motive force of the new nationalism, its justification and strength lay in a growing appreciation of its own culture to which European scholarship had also materially contributed.

So the twenty-five Asian scholars, who for a week discussed in London with some sixty Western historians the problems of writing the histories of their countries, were laying the foundations for new nations as well as for the writing of their history.

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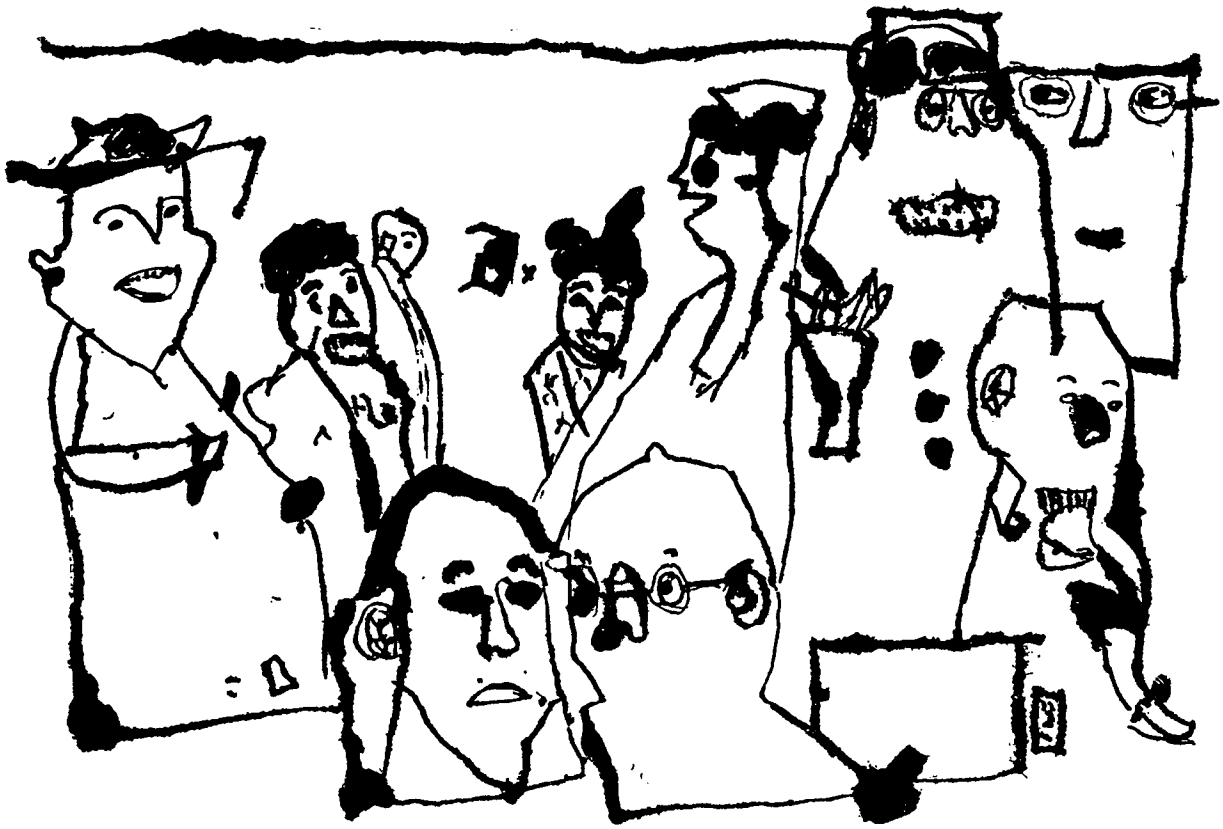

You're Only Young Once

Joyce Cary

IT WAS fair time—about four o'clock on a hot September day, and warming up every minute. In the market-place twenty roundabouts were blasting out different tunes, dust rose sixty feet in the air like a thick yellow smoke, so that the crowd seemed to be smouldering with heat and excitement. A continual tremor passed through it as through a banked-down fire. At first glance it was a dark and impacted crowd—country people in their Sunday clothes massed together before the booths. But as you watched, the mass was agitated, as by a sudden flame among its ashes, and half a dozen girls or youths came bursting through. Everywhere these groups of youngsters, laughing, shouting at each other, were pushing through the crowds, choosing the densest and most resistant for each charge.

And the heavy mothers of families, the sweating farm labourers, gave way before them without change of expression. Even by the church at the far end of the fair, behind the market cross, traditional resting place, the young were tacitly allowed their privilege of Fair Day.

In the alley between church and graveyard where low walls afforded seats for worn-out parents and exhausted old people, two small, very dirty boys were blowing whistles with all their might; it was obvious in the way they trampled over the old people's feet and cannoned into their knees, that they were deliberately making nuisances of themselves. And the grandmothers and grandfathers seated along the wall looked at the boys with resignation and drew back their trampled feet, hastily, painfully, but without protest.

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The gypsy woman, near the church porch, who through a narrow opening about three inches long, in her black bodice, was nursing her baby, paid no attention to them. When at last she was bumped into, indeed, she gave them a ferocious glance. But she did not speak, she only moved her elbow to protect the baby's head and followed the pair with her furious eyes. Her gypsy rage against all the world accepted a blow, on this day, from children.

All these resigned critical faces swivelled again when three girls came rushing in from the side—three girls of about sixteen, in frocks cut far down on bare shoulders, with bright-painted lips and towers of hair, curled like Indian temples.

They were linked together in chain, and looking back over their shoulders as if pursued. All wore pink paper hats labelled on the crown in large black letters, "KISS ME QUICK." A little blonde who brought up the tail, very young, with a short pug nose and immense protruding lips, carried also on her braced-up breasts, round as cricket balls, a blue sash from shoulder to waist, with the legend in gold "LOVE ME."

THEY were all talking at once between shrieks of laughter, and in their headlong rush they nearly fell over a middle-aged man in brown tweeds and labourer's boots who was holding out a small girl over the gutter. He hastily moved out of their way, but though they had not even glanced at him, they were checked, and suddenly, as by a common inspiration, they sat down on the wall, and began to fan themselves, panting and crying, "Ooh, in't it hot," "Ooh, I'm thirsty."

They preened themselves like sparrows after a dust bath and sang out their words to be heard. It was a performance, and as they now let their defiant eyes pass carelessly over their neighbours, they acted disdain and surprise.

"Ooh," cried the blonde, at the top of her voice, "Where've we got to?"

All three broke into wild giggles and clung together. The old people, the gypsy, the row of tired middle-aged women, the farm labourer waiting patiently for the child to finish, gazed at them in a trance of patience. So they might have looked at a house on fire or a flooded meadow.

The blonde darted off and returned with three large ices in cardboard buckets; the three girls began carefully and delicately, with their wooden spoons, to eat their ices in the smallest possible scrapings. The contrast between the careful precision of these movements and the animation of their bodies, their wriggles and wagglings as they talked, perpetually pressing closer and emphasising their words with nods, tosses of their heads, reminded one of kittens or puppies at play.

The discussion was loud—it was part of the performance, meant to shock, impress, defy. The leader, a dark-haired girl, broad-chested, short-necked, with bare legs, scorched pink in the sun, was telling some story. "So she said to me, it's not good enough. And I said to her, it's good enough for me. Well, I ask you, if you're going with a boy——"

The other two agreed so vigorously that the rest of the story was drowned in comments and illustrations.

Suddenly four youths appeared, and came along the alley. The first, in a bright blue suit, with a red rose in his button-hole, a tickler in his right hand, and a paper policeman's helmet cocked over his right eye, was swaggering in every joint. His head rocked, his elbows jerked, his legs struck out sideways, and at the same time, his face wore an expression of triumphant delight. It was just such an expression as one sees upon some hero of the day, who, after receptions, cheers, flags, deputations, and a ceremonial lunch, comes down into the street between rows of admirers, and reveals on his face, flushed with adulation and champagne, a certain vain, innocent, undisciplined expression which says plainly, "Yes, I am a great man, a perfect hero, and how nice that is." You see that he has forgotten all reserve, all precaution, he is feeling how nice everyone is, how good, how kind, what a nice world it is after all, where no one is ashamed of the finest, the

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noblest emotions, and no hero need be ashamed of admitting to heroism.

And just as behind such tennis or film star, one sees two or three enthusiasts who, having broken through the police cordon and eluded the secretaries, the organisers, crowd on the great man's heels, beaming on him from ear to ear with a fascinated, astonished joy, so after this champion in the blue suit came three other youths, literally staggering with admiration. They were holding each other by the arms, for support, reeling with laughter, and between these fits, uttering loud cries, "Good old Bert."

THEY brushed past the gypsy, who again moved her elbow to protect her baby, and glared; they bumped into the farm labourer, who was buttoning up his little girl's pants, and he said "Hi!" in a fierce tone; they received from the old couple next door that calm level stare with which responsible persons estimate the degrees of hysteria.

The "Hi" of the labourer was not indignant, it was merely a warning; the stare of the old couple was no less resigned than before; the grandmothers and grandfathers removed their feet in silence. But for some reason, the youths were disconcerted by their reception in this backwater. Apparently they had expected appreciation. The hero, at the labourer's shout, visibly jumped, and gave him a surprised nervous glance—his fans, even while they staggered against the gypsy's knees, turned away their faces from her black glare. Their shouts became affected, self-conscious, and much louder. The joyful parade became an invasion as of enemy troops.

Also it slowed down. The leader, coming past the church door and finding himself close to the end of the alley, halted. He perceived that merely to go away would give the effect of escape, of humiliating flight.

He looked round and saw just at his elbow the three kiss-me girls. He struck a gallant attitude before them; the three followers, crowding together, came to a halt and gazed at him with broad grins of anticipation.

The girls were still deep in their conversation. The little blonde at the far end, wooden spoon in hand, looked up at the youth with vague enquiry.

He touched her hat with his tickler, and stooping down with a swaggering bow, gave her a loud kiss. The girl, leaving her spoon in the ice-cream, jumped up and dealt him a slap in the face, so well-aimed, so expert, that it cracked like a laundry-bat on wet linen. It caused the policeman's helmet to fly into the air and sail into the graveyard, where it lay sideways on a tomb.

The three admirers took a step back; the hero, astonished, with one crimson cheek, and looking strangely diminished by the loss of his helmet, made a desperate, a swaggering attempt to carry the thing off. He cried loudly, "Here—what's this?" and tried to snatch the girl's hat.

She, holding her ice-cream sideways at the full stretch of her left arm, flew at him, smacking him on each cheek in turn, first with the palm, then with the knuckles of her right hand, in a succession of stinging blows that went off like rapid fire. He cringed down, and she gave him a kick, delivered with the flat of her high-heeled shoe, that sent him whirling into the crowd beyond. The three followers, crouching, covering their heads with their hands, and yelling in terror that was not altogether mock, vaulted over the wall and scattered among the graves.

The blonde had already returned to her place. She inspected the inside of her ice-cream barrel which she had so skilfully preserved, spoon and all, unspilt, scraped it round, and crooking her little finger in a refined movement, put it between her lips. Her eyes were already fixed eagerly on her companions, who had not so much as looked up during the battle. Neither could lose a chance of breaking in with her own latest triumph over the mysterious, the powerful she. "Yes, and what I said to her——" "Well, I said if she's going to make all that trouble——" "And then she had the nerve——"

The blonde dived forward, nose to nose. "You know what she said to me——" and the three voices rose louder and louder in a dramatic chorus, "She—she—she——"

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C. A. R. Crosland

". . . About Equality" (III)

Education and the Class System

WE HAVE moved some way in Britain towards equality of incomes, yet we still seem far from a socially equal and classless society. "England," wrote George Orwell in 1941, "is the most class-ridden country under the sun." Matters have improved a little since *The Lion and the Unicorn* was written. Yet despite the post-war redistribution of income, we still retain a deeper sense of class, a more obvious social stratification, and stronger class resentments than any of the Scandinavian, Australasian, or North American countries. In fact we almost take our class system for granted, so completely does it permeate our social attitudes. But the foreign visitor or even the returning traveller, less accustomed to the phenomenon, is still shocked and surprised by its extent. (It is also evident in our relations with other, and especially Asiatic and African, peoples. A recent, poignant testimony to it is Sherpa Tenzing's account in his autobiography of his agonised indecision as between climbing Everest with the British in 1953, or waiting to climb it another year with the beloved Raymond Lambert and the Swiss. "I would rather have gone back to Everest with the Swiss. . . . With the Swiss and the French I had been treated as a comrade, an equal, in a way that is not possible for the British. They are kind men; they are brave; they are fair and just, always. But always, too, there is a line between them and the outsider, between sahib and employee.")

The stubborn persistence of this phenomenon, in the face of torrential social changes induced by two world wars and six years of Labour rule, is surely puzzling. Britain now presents an unusual paradox to the world: a society characterised by an exceptionally mature political democracy, growing economic prosperity, and a social order which at first sight metes out social justice in a reasonable degree; yet still with an unreconstructed class system, productive of deep collective resentments. The apparent invulnerability of this system to changes in the sphere of income suggests that the "classless society" will not be reached simply by more redistribution of wealth. Educational reform in particular is likely to be of infinitely greater significance.

II

THE school system remains the most divisive, unjust, and wasteful of all the aspects of social inequality. First, it denies even the limited aim of equal opportunity. Before the war, it did so to an extent which now seems almost fantastic. Of boys born between 1910 and 1929, only 14 per cent of those from state elementary schools achieved a secondary education, compared with 89 per cent of those from private primary schools.

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If one divides the population into seven occupational-status categories, a boy from categories 1–3 had five times the chance of a grammar-school education as a boy from categories 6–7 (and thirteen times the chance of reaching a university)—and this without reference to boys educated at independent schools.

The 1944 Education Act set out to make secondary education universal; and formally it has done so. Yet opportunities for advancement are still not equal.

First, the intention was, since it was recognised that the grammar schools would retain their superior quality and hence their differential advantage as an avenue to the better occupations, to throw open this advantage, by abolishing fees and standardising entry procedures, to all social classes on equal terms. This aim has not yet been fully realised. The class distribution of the grammar school population is still markedly askew. The middle class heavily over-represented: the upper working class, with one-third of grammar school places, now reasonably represented: but the lower working class, with only 15 per cent of places, still heavily under-represented. And not only do proportionately more middle-class children enter the grammar schools, but once there they do much better. Children from professional and managerial families account for 15 per cent of the total population, 25 per cent of the grammar school population, and 44 per cent of the sixth-form population. "From the children of [such] parents at one extreme," states a Government report, "to the children of unskilled workers at the other, there is a steady and marked decline in performance at the grammar school, in the length of school life, and in academic promise at the time of leaving."

These contrasts are much larger than can be explained on genetic grounds. No doubt the proportion of high-I.Q. children is greater amongst the middle class than amongst the working class; but given the far higher absolute numbers of the latter, one would still expect them to show significantly better results than they do. The explanation must be looked for partly in social influences—the less-educated parents, the more crowded (and noisy) homes, the smaller opportunities for extra-curricular learning, of working-class children: and partly in financial factors—a child continuing at school is still a heavy financial strain on working-class parents, and one which could at least be mitigated, and early leaving thus discouraged, by more generous maintenance payments and an extension of family allowances. But, for the present, equal opportunity is subject to definite limitations.

But the question of grammar school places is relevant only to the above-average child. Matters are much worse when we turn to the average child. The least we can ask for is that all ordinary children, irrespective of social background, should enjoy a good primary and secondary education in decent buildings, with classes of reasonable size, and up to a reasonable age. This the children of better-off parents enjoy in the independent schools. But many working-class children, owing to the appalling low quality of parts of the state educational system, are still enjoying nothing of the sort.

The handicap arises mainly from overcrowding and bad buildings. The deficiencies on these two counts are by now notorious. The Select Committee on Estimates wrote in 1953 that "at every point they were confronted with overcrowding, lack of schools, a shortage of teachers, and often rapidly deteriorating and even dangerous school buildings. . . . The condition into which many of the older schools in the country have fallen is the worst feature. Some of them are no better than slums." No doubt matters are gradually—though very gradually—improving; and the situation will be greatly eased when the population "bulge" has finally left the schools in the early 1960's.

But one cannot speak of even an approach to equal opportunity until the average size of class in state schools has been substantially reduced: the "all-age" schools, which still deny a proper secondary education to over 700,000 children, have been reorganised: the black-listed slum schools have been closed

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down: the many structurally sound but grimly forbidding Victorian Gothic schools in industrial towns have been improved: the school-leaving age raised to sixteen: and County Colleges opened as envisaged in the 1944 Act. This is, of course, simply a matter of money and resources, on which something is said later in the article.

III

BUT even when these improvements have been made, we shall still not have equality of opportunity so long as we maintain a system of superior private schools, open to the wealthier classes, but out of reach of poorer children however talented and deserving. This is much the most flagrant inequality of opportunity, as it is cause of class inequality generally, in our educational system; and I have never been able to understand why socialists have been so obsessed with the question of the grammar schools, and so indifferent to the much more glaring injustice of the independent schools.

That these schools are superior, and notably the "public schools,"* is beyond dispute. As compared even with grammar schools, let alone most secondary modern schools, their staffing ratio is higher, the academic quality (and often the devotion to teaching) of the staff superior, their surroundings more agreeable, their extra-curricular facilities more ample, and (most important for good teaching) their holidays longer. It is sometimes said that these advantages are confined to some thirty or so of the major public schools, and that the remainder are in no way educationally superior to good grammar schools. I doubt this (except for a tiny handful of famous grammar schools). But even if it were true, the minor public schools would still confer a crucial *social* advantage, namely, better prospects of a high-paid or high-status job. This advantage is attributable partly to the widespread belief (whether well-founded or not is irrelevant) that public school products are more dependable and self-reliant; partly to the still important though intangible factor of the right accent, bearing, and manners; and partly to the fact that persons now in authority, and responsible for selecting and promoting, have commonly themselves been to public schools, and so have a natural bias. This bias may often be unconscious (though loyalty to the old school is by no means defunct), but it is none the less real for that. The consequence is that boys even from minor public schools have significantly better occupational prospects at any given level of educational attainment; and the attachment of parents to these schools is not just irrational "snob" prejudice.

Granted that this is an obvious injustice, what is to be done about it? There are three possible courses of action. First, the State might proscribe private education altogether, on the grounds that the purchase by wealthy citizens of so overwhelming a social advantage is clearly inequitable. This is not the right solution. It is out of tune with the temper of the country, and is therefore not likely in any event to be politically practicable. It is not sensible to stifle all private educational experiment; this may be sometimes crankish, but at other times is genuinely progressive. And a flat proscription is undesirable on libertarian grounds. Once incomes have been distributed as the government of the day thinks fit, it is generally right, save in wartime or post-war periods of national crisis, that citizens should be left free to spend them as they wish, provided only that no nuisance is caused to others. And the interference with private liberty would be intolerable: the closing of all independent schools would naturally encourage a strong demand both for private tutors and for places in schools abroad; and the resulting inequalities would compel the extension of the ban to these facilities also.

The second approach is the sanguine one. Some optimists expect the public schools to wither quietly away as redistribution bites further into the higher incomes, and as the

* By which is meant here the independent boarding schools, and not the entire membership of the Headmasters' Conference. Foreign readers should note the quaint solecism whereby public schools mean exclusive private schools.

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state schools improve their standards. This is excessively hopeful. Whatever happens in the state system, the independent boarding schools will long retain a real advantage in educational standards, social prestige, and job prospects; and recent years have shown that middle-class parents are prepared to make very substantial sacrifices to obtain this advantage for their children. Moreover our tax system permits fees to be paid in many other ways than out of current taxed income —not only out of capital, or tax-free capital gains, but by tax-free covenants taken out by relatives, or insurance policies taken out at birth. The next Labour Government might alter matters somewhat. But all the public schools now have long waiting-lists; and in the light of middle-class parental psychology I can see little sign that they are likely to be starved out by penury.

A drift away from the private preparatory schools is rather more likely. These offer, on the average, a lesser relative educational advantage; in the nature of things they have little influence on ultimate job-selection; and although some of them are appalling breeding-grounds of snobbery, they carry much less social prestige than the public schools. It is therefore quite possible that middle-class parents might gradually desert them as standards in the primary schools improve. This would be wholly desirable. The educational loss would be infinitesimal, if indeed positive at all; and a pronounced social gain from mixing the classes would result. But in England, at least, no change at the primary level can ever be wholly decisive either for class attitudes or the diffusion of opportunities; and the problem of the public schools remains.

THE third and most sensible approach is to work for a gradual integration of these schools into the state system of education. This is no more than a reversion to the proposals of the Fleming Committee, which, recognising even in 1944 the injustice of the present system, recommended that the public schools should initially offer 25 per cent of their places to non-fee-paying pupils from state elementary schools, the proportion to rise stage by stage "with a view to the progressive application of the principle that schools should be equally accessible to all pupils and that no child otherwise qualified shall be excluded owing to lack of means."

Unfortunately this recommendation was not implemented after the war. In some areas no attempt whatever was made to follow it up, in others local authorities compromised with a much lower figure than 25 per cent. The reasons for this failure are well known. Local authorities, naturally reluctant at a time of rapidly rising rates to incur the heavy additional fee expenditure involved, always disliked the scheme. Many parents of working-class children were also hostile; and indeed it is far from clear that the social and psychological effects of applying the proposal on a very small scale are at all desirable—the "guinea-pig" children will either be unhappy or become *déclassé*, and in any case the effects on the social structure would be infinitesimal. And both the grammar schools and Labour educationalists were naturally unfriendly to the removal of the best pupils from the state system in order to bolster up the private sector.

But this is quite a different matter from applying the scheme on a really large scale; and the next Labour Government must simply choose between sending no state-aided pupils to the public schools at all, which would be a public confession that it had lost interest in Socialism and equality,* and sending a really large number. Clearly it must do the latter, and announce that its policy requires the grant by the public schools initially of 25 per cent "free" places, rising rapidly to 50 per cent, and later to at least 75 per cent; the ultimate objective being 100 per cent competitive entry, regardless of whether the children had previously been to state or private schools. The corollary would

* Incredibly enough, the Labour Party made this confession at the last election—unless some stray pieces of nationalisation were thought to be a substitute for reforming the strongest remaining bastion of class privilege.

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be financial assistance, and public representation on governing bodies.

Would this raise insoluble social and educational difficulties? There seems no reason to think so. We already have a large number of "direct grant" schools, including some of the most famous grammar schools, operating a 25 per cent or 50 per cent "free place" system with great success. They find neither that the publicly-appointed governors make an interfering nuisance of themselves: nor that selection by an external test gives worse results than the school's own internal methods of selection: nor that social divergences arise between aided and fee-paying pupils. No doubt in major public schools, where the latter are drawn from a narrower social class, such divergences would be more obvious. But then half the object of the scheme is to present social contrasts under a single roof, in order ultimately to narrow them.

Could such a reform be carried through voluntarily? It is always better to act by agreement if this is at all possible. Although the public schools are not now under any great financial strain, many headmasters, and notably those from the better and more famous schools, have a distinctly bad conscience about their present methods of selection; and they might be inclined to co-operate. It would certainly be worth-while to make a bid for an agreed scheme first; and if a majority of the public schools came in, this might be sufficient. But if a majority declined, the community must then assert its right to deal with a flagrant restriction on equality of opportunity.

By this solution the public schools, while retaining their distinctive character, teaching cadres, and genuine educational assets, would steadily grow more socially heterogeneous; and they would cease to cause that interaction between parental status, educational opportunity, and filial status which now creates such social "inertia," and restricts the upward movement from below. No doubt middle-class children would remain for some time over-represented, as they are in the grammar schools, by virtue of genetic or environmental advantages. But the over-representation would at least be based on genuine differences in intelligence, and not on the adventitious possession of private means; and in any event it would be much less marked than now.

IV

We should then have an educational system which was exceptionally just and fair, in the limited sense of offering equal opportunities regardless, so far as this is ever possible, of birth or wealth; and exceptionally efficient in that the ablest pupils would be creamed off and given a superior training. We should largely have attained the goal of the equal-opportunity society.

But I argued in the second article that this was not a sufficient goal for socialists in Britain. Equal opportunities for self-advancement, superimposed on a segregated educational system, would still leave too wide a gap between the new élite and the average citizen. Of course the gap would be less, owing to the freer vertical movement, than under the present system; and the selection for the élite more just. And of course some degree of educational "éliteness," resting on the universities, the sixth forms, or simply the fact of staying at school until eighteen, is inevitable. But here the prestige-gulf between the public schools and the rest would still be such as to create an élite much too detached from the point of view either of social justice, or contentment, or democracy. We can find supporting evidence for this view in the post-war experience of providing equal opportunities even within a segregated *state* system of education.

The implementation (though it is not clear that it was the intention) of the 1944 Act was in terms of a tripartite secondary school system—grammar, secondary modern, and technical—the three streams being divided out by a selection at eleven-plus. Although there was supposed to be "parity of esteem" between the three types of school, it was recognised that the grammar schools would long retain their superiority; and the eleven-plus examination, combined with the abolition of grammar school fees, was intended to

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provide an equal opportunity for all children to enjoy this superior advantage.

It was precisely because the advantage was so superior that the eleven-plus examination assumed such overwhelming importance, both objectively and subjectively, in the years following the war. Not only did the grammar school often start with a long-standing prestige, while the secondary modern started with none: not only did it offer an immensely superior education at a time when the secondary modern school was being improvised, usually from scratch, and in wholly unsuitable buildings: but it also represented the main, if not the only, avenue to well-paid, non-manual, high-status occupations. This reflects the fact that as the small man and the self-employed give way to the large-scale managerial structure, and as technical proficiency becomes increasingly essential, educational qualifications (which means in this context a grammar school background) become more and more the indispensable condition of rising in the social scale.

We have here a microcosm of what a national élite system of education, based on competitive entry, might look like. One thing cannot be doubted, that it would be exceedingly unpopular. The eleven-plus examination came to be bitterly disliked and resented. It was thought that a child's whole future was decided on a single day's test. No doubt much of the dislike was based on ignorance or exaggeration. The results were in fact never decided on a single day's test. Immense care was commonly taken over borderline cases. There was always provision (though often imperfect) for retesting and transferring "late developers." And the better secondary modern schools began increasingly to provide advanced courses and thus a route to the higher occupations.

But there was quite sufficient truth in these intuitive fears to give them a genuine validity. Nor were they assuaged by the seeming justice of the process of selection—indeed this may, as I suggested last month, actually have exacerbated the resentments. At any rate the depth of these fears and subsequent resentments, and the intense mental and nervous strain imposed on parents and children alike by the knowledge of what was at stake, strongly underline the argument of my last article that equal opportunity, if combined with marked educational and social disparities, will not create a society which is contented and deemed to be just.

There are also, of course, strong practical objections to segregation at eleven. It is conceded that mistakes in selection are inevitable, and indeed occur on a wide scale. The question is whether any practicable provision for later transfer can adequately correct them, given the upheaval involved in changing schools, the social disgrace for children who are graded downwards, and the pressure on overworked headmasters and Education Officers. Nor is it clear that there is any logic in this particular tripartite division—that there are in fact three clearly-marked types of child, which can be neatly sorted and labelled in this way: or even if there were, that the numbers in each could be accurately predetermined, as they must be if separate schools are to be built for them. The whole business has a distinctly arbitrary air.

If we add to these drawbacks, inherent in the segregation of grammar school children, the parallel drawbacks which would attach to a still further selection for free places in the public schools; and if in addition to the practical drawbacks we consider the divisive and stratifying effect, wholly unknown in most other advanced countries, of educational segregation at widely varying levels of social prestige and advancement, then we must surely incline, as socialists, towards a "comprehensive" system of education, under which all children would ideally share the same broad experience at least up to the official school-leaving age. Indeed this would seem, if we had a free choice in the matter, a condition of creating an equal and "classless" society.

V

IN FACT we do not have a completely free choice, since we inherit an elaborate non-comprehensive school structure which cannot be forcibly dismantled. For this and other

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reasons to be discussed below, the Labour Party could never impose a comprehensive system rapidly on the entire country. Nevertheless we have some choice in the matter; and we must therefore consider the arguments commonly brought against comprehensive secondary education.

The most forceful opposition spokesman has been Dr. (now Sir) Eric James, the headmaster of Manchester Grammar School. He bases his case on a passionate belief in the importance of "leadership"—an importance greater than ever now that the range of social problems has become so wide and complex. The nurture of potential leaders, he argues, must be the first concern of the educational system; this requires their segregation into separate schools; and any egalitarian sentiment must give way to this overriding aim.

No reasonable person would deny that leadership is important. But general statements do not advance matters very far. For instance, how wide a gap in status is required between the leadership élite and the rest of the community? How do we weigh the need for leadership against other social "goods," such as democracy, or equality, or group participation? And, more fundamentally, can we so precisely delineate the qualities needed for leadership that we could, even if we so wished, build our entire educational structure round them?

Dr. James lists these qualities as high intelligence, an intensive academic education, integrity, courage, judgment, stability, tact, and perseverance (the qualities, evidently, of a successful headmaster). But some of the most effective leaders in history have been illiterate, academically moronic, dishonest, unstable, neurotic, if not actually insane or epileptic. Even if we exclude "bad" leaders and confine ourselves to "good" ones, we still find a great many of the latter, indeed probably a majority, who have had no intensive academic education (and still more who have had no tact). In fact the above is just a list of "optimum" leadership qualities so vague and general that almost anything can be read into it.

All we can say about leadership is that as an absolute concept it has little or no meaning. The quality of leadership is specific to particular situations; what makes for good leadership in one situation may make for poor leadership in another; and group psychology has not advanced to the point where we can be sure of how to elicit the leadership qualities required by different situations.

However, we have to make commonsense judgments; and surely all the evidence is against the view that the type of leadership required today is likely to be the type encouraged by an élite system of education. No doubt Plato and Arnold were all very well in their day; but it would be distinctly odd of educational systems adapted in the one case to an idealised oligarchy of philosopher-kings, and in the other to the needs of a far-flung British Empire, were equally well adapted to a democratic, egalitarian, mid-20th century society.

Most people would, I suppose, agree that leadership today called for three attributes, apart from a list of desirable moral qualities: it must be characterised by good judgment in public affairs, it must be technically efficient, and it must be democratic. The first attribute, more than ever necessary by reason of the growing scope and complexity of public action so rightly stressed by Dr. James, does not obviously demand an intensive academic education. It requires a measure (no more) of brains and intelligence, a "feel" for situations, a sense of the possible, great psychological intuition, and a knowledge of public affairs. It does not require exceptional academic attainments, as anyone who has been both in academic life and politics well knows, nor, so far as one can see, a special, separate education; indeed, if anything, one would suppose the opposite, both *a priori* and judging by the lack of this practical wisdom amongst so many contemporary intellectuals.

On the question of technically efficient leadership, there is often a misunderstanding. It is sometimes said that the selective education of the most talented children is essential to Britain's survival in a competitive and technical world. But what this survival

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calls for is simply a great deal more expenditure on research, applied science, technical colleges, and so on; and this does not require segregated secondary schools of the type suggested, as the example of the U.S. clearly shows. And there is a more general confusion here. Where Britain lags behind the U.S. is not in the calibre of the top academic or "grammar school" section of the population, but in the *average* technical ability lower down the scale. From this point of view we positively need less concentration on an educational élite, and more on the average standard of attainment. It is here that Britain is always weakest; and America gains competitively far more from having eight times the proportionate number of students in (often second-class) universities, than Britain gains from having public schools and grammar schools.

Lastly, the democratic quality of leadership. Dr. James argues that segregation along Platonic lines represents a "profoundly democratic conception," since it provides equal opportunity without regard to birth or wealth. Certainly this is more democratic than segregation without equal opportunity, such as we have at present. But this is scarcely the relevant comparison; and one cannot reasonably maintain that any system of segregating a particular group of children, however chosen, into superior schools offering superior prospects, is more democratic than a system in which all children share broadly the same education. And whichever is the more democratic conception, the latter is surely more likely to foster democratic attitudes.

We cannot, I think, yet be at all sure what system of education is the most likely to generate the type of leadership which we require; indeed it is not altogether clear, in our rapidly changing society, exactly what type of leadership we do require. But *prima facie* judgments, and a consideration of the experience of other countries, certainly do not point unequivocally to a Platonic élite.

One may be allowed to ignore other arguments, allegedly of principle but in fact rather emotional, such as that to object to an "aristocracy of learning" is merely to display "social prejudice," or a bias in favour of mediocrity, or "a purely political" attitude, or an indifference to the needs of individual children and hence to the requirements of the community. We may assume that neither set of protagonists is more prejudiced, political, or callous than the other, but that they simply differ on how various values are to be weighed, how the community can best be organised, and how the needs of children *as a whole* can best be met. Nothing is to be gained by the use of prejudicial language.

VI

But many people still object to the idea of comprehensive schools, not necessarily on grounds of principle, but simply because they fear the results may be bad in practice. The most common fears are generally that standards will be lowered, and the clever child held back to the pace of the average child: and specifically that if the school is to cater adequately for advanced and sixth-form study, it must be vast in size —Dr. James mentions a figure of 5,000—and so sacrifice any intimate, personal quality, and all chance that the headmaster will know all his pupils personally.

These are matters to be determined factually; and in this country, with (at the time of writing) only some fourteen comprehensive schools as yet in being, there is naturally no conclusive evidence. But a careful study of all the experiments to date affords at least preliminary evidence; and this does not bear out the fears expressed. There is no sign of any levelling-down of standards, and some evidence even of the reverse. The main reason is that the comprehensive schools have not, as many feared (and some hoped) that they would, mixed children of different abilities in the same class, but have adopted a system of testing and differentiation designed to produce homogeneous classes of more or less similar standards of attainment.

This has shocked some comprehensive enthusiasts, who had hoped for a system of "social promotion" on the American model,

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with virtually no grading by ability.* But both common sense and American experience suggests that this would lead to a really serious levelling-down of standards, and a quite excessive handicap to the clever child. Division into streams, according to ability, remains essential.

This does not mean, as some critics suggest, that the whole experiment is then a waste of time, since this selection by ability will simply reproduce all the evils alleged against the eleven-plus examination. This is to get the matter out of perspective. The object of having comprehensive schools is not to abolish all competition and all envy, which might be rather a hopeless task, but to avoid the extreme social division caused by physical segregation into schools of widely divergent status, and the extreme social resentment caused by failure to win a grammar (or, in future, public) school place, when this is thought to be the only avenue to a "middle-class" occupation. That division and that resentment bear no relation whatever to the effects of grading *within* a single school, with the possibility of regrading at any time simply by moving across a corridor. One has only to think of the present public schools, where it could hardly be maintained that the divisions and resentments created by failure to get into the sixth form, or to become a prefect, are in any way comparable with those caused by failure to win a grammar school place.

So far as the sixth form argument is concerned, the evidence is necessarily inconclusive. It is not true that all comprehensive schools will in fact be vast; most of those now projected are for well below 1,500 pupils, and some for only 500–600. Even supposing the average size to be 1,000, it is not clear to the layman, given a reasonable devolution, that this must be disastrous. Many public schools are of a comparable size; and most of their products whom I know had little personal contact with their headmaster, for which they now seem none the worse. At any rate, the existing comprehensive schools appear to provide for advanced work at least as adequately as do most grammar schools; and this is a criticism which so far, at least, must be regarded as non-proven.

MUCH of the argument against comprehensive schools proceeds by analogy. The critics point to the low standards characteristic of many American high schools. These low standards are not in dispute. But there are many possible explanations besides the comprehensive character of these schools: for example, the anti-highbrow and anti-academic ("anti-egghead") tradition of American life, the acute shortage of teachers (especially male teachers), the low quality of many of the teachers, the insistence on automatic "social promotion" by age-groups and the lack of grading by ability, an excessive attachment to Deweyism and "life-adjustment" education at the expense of more basic academic disciplines, the overwhelming preference for vocational courses, and so on. All or any of these influences, none of which is or need be reproduced in English comprehensive schools, may be responsible for the lower standards.

This is confirmed by the experience of Sweden, which has recently embarked on the experiment of replacing a tripartite by a comprehensive system of education. This experiment appears to be proceeding most successfully. The size of school varies from 200 in rural areas to 1,200 in Stockholm; and no one suggests that a much larger size is necessary to ensure an adequate grammar school stream. Educational standards have been maintained. There is no disagreeable status gap or resentment between the different streams. And all the major political parties are supporting the experiment. Taking Sweden and America together, it seems clear that the results of comprehensive education are not uniquely determined by the fact of "comprehensiveness," but depend mainly on

* Some of them, their heads perhaps a little turned by too much sociology, even insist on classes being known not by numbers, but by the teachers' names, lest any mark at all of superior or inferior status be conferred. This is simply egalitarianism run mad.

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the cultural traditions of the country concerned.

And surely the analogy of the pre-war public schools is relevant. Many of them then bore a close resemblance to a comprehensive school. They were often extremely large—certainly too large for the head to know each individual boy. They taught all faculties—they had, that is to say, the equivalent of grammar, secondary modern, and technical streams. They took all intellectual levels, and not simply the top 15 per cent or 25 per cent; indeed with a few notable exceptions, such as Winchester, almost any child, unless an imbecile, could find a place. No doubt the average level of intelligence was higher, owing to the more favourable parental background; but the dispersion was probably not significantly less. Yet the educational results were excellent, even in lesser-known schools where no exceptional heredity factor was at work. It seems that many of the anti-comprehensive arguments are not consistent with a belief in the virtues of the mixed fee-paying public school.

VII

WERE we starting *tabula rasa*, I should therefore strongly favour a non-segregated, comprehensive system of schools, with other schools, not indeed abolished, but existing merely as an oblique appendage to the national system, as they do in most other countries, and not as a separate, nation-wide top stratum, as in England. The social arguments for this solution seem to me irresistible, the educational arguments against it inconclusive.

We are not, however, starting *tabula rasa*, but with segregated schools already established and strongly entrenched; and even if they were not, we could still not drive straight on to the objective, for the ground ahead is studded with obstacles—the shortage of suitable buildings, the state of public opinion, and the fact of local educational self-determination.

Thus even within the state sector there can be no question of suddenly closing down the grammar schools and converting the secondary moderns into comprehensive schools. These latter require an exceptional calibre of headmaster, of which the supply is severely limited: a high-quality staff for sixth-form teaching—again a factor in limited supply: and buildings of an adequate scale and scope—and most secondary modern buildings, which would have to be converted, are quite unsuitable. Until and unless the proper supply conditions exist, it would be quite wrong to close down grammar schools of acknowledged academic quality. The result would simply be a decline in educational standards, and discredit on the whole experiment.

Not that this would be possible, in any event, so long as we have local autonomy in educational matters. Only a minority of education authorities at present favour a large-scale conversion to a comprehensive pattern; and no one proposes that the remainder should be coerced. It would, moreover, be absurd from a socialist point of view to close down the grammar schools, while leaving the public schools still holding their present commanding position. This would simply intensify the class cleavage by removing the middle tier which now spans the gulf between top and bottom. It is curious that socialists, so often blind to the question of the public schools, should fail to see that "parity of esteem" within the state sector, combined with a continuation of independent schools outside, will actually increase the *disparity* of esteem in the system as a whole.

What, then, can be done? First, a Labour Government should explicitly state a preference for the comprehensive principle, and should actively encourage local authorities—and such advice carries great weight—to be more audacious in experimenting with comprehensive schools in the light of the marked success of the experiments to date.

Secondly, where new comprehensive schools cannot or will not be built, the object must be to weaken to the greatest possible extent the significance of the eleven-plus examination, and the rigidity of the prestige and physical barriers inherent in the present tripartite stratification. This is partly a matter

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of money and resources. As new secondary modern and technical schools are built and staffing ratios improve, thus narrowing the gap in standards and general ambience, so the desperate, universal obsession with a grammar school place will weaken. It is partly a matter of facilitating later transfer, so that the "last chance" atmosphere now attaching to the eleven-plus examination is dissipated. And it is partly a matter of severing the present direct and unique link between grammar school and superior occupation—by creating "grammar school streams" in secondary modern schools, encouraging the taking of subjects in General Certificate, instituting "special courses" of a more advanced nature, facilitating late transfer into the sixth form at grammar schools, and so on. But perhaps the most important step, directly in fostering "parity of esteem" and indirectly in encouraging these other reforms, would be the raising of the school-leaving age.

All this is to some extent a second-best. Late transfers from one school to another are not in general satisfactory; and considering the leeway to be made up, the secondary modern school will not easily achieve parity of esteem. But these changes will at least increasingly break up the present rigid, tripartite pattern—the more so as local authorities experiment with bilateral and other new types of secondary school. Diversification is at least one route towards equality.

But we still face the problem of the independent schools. One important change for the better, as I suggested earlier, may be the gradual closure, as we achieve more equality of wealth, of private preparatory schools, and the disappearance of one early and influential source of class insemination. In the independent secondary schools, the existence of 75 per cent free places will, of course, weaken their present stratifying influence.

The problem is then two-fold. First, these schools must not be allowed to become the breeding-ground of a new, superior intellectual élite. This requires that we carefully attend to the admonition of the Fleming Committee, that the free places in these schools should not go simply to the cleverest children, but should be spread amongst a wide cross-section, with a preference, naturally enough, for those who want, or seem apt for, a boarding-school education. And in the long run it requires, in my view, that some of these schools should be converted to other educational uses—as high schools for advanced tuition, short-term boarding establishments, junior universities, adult education centres, and the like.

But a huge gap in social prestige will remain for many years to come. Closing this gap is simply a matter of standards in the state sector, and hence ultimately of priorities in national expenditure. It is true that an air of unreality, even of absurdity, now attaches to this statement. This is because it has so often been made in the last few years, especially in perorations, where it was always sure of a round of applause; but nothing has ever been done to implement it. Only if performance really matches promise—only if, that is, the Labour Party gives education a much higher priority than in the past, and comes to see it as of far greater significance to socialism than the nationalisation of meat-procuring or even chemicals—only then will the reality take shape in the form of bricks and mortar, more and better teachers, a longer school life in ample, imaginative surroundings.

Gradually, the schools which children go to will become, as in the United States, not an automatic function of brains or class location, but a matter of personal preference and local accident. The system will increasingly, if the Labour Party does its job, be built around the comprehensive school. But even in the large non-comprehensive sector, all schools will more and more be socially mixed; all will provide routes to the universities and to every type of occupation, from the highest to the lowest; and it will cease to occur to employers to ask what school job-applicants have been to. Then, very slowly, Britain may cease to be the most class-ridden country in the world.

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Boris Ford

THE REST WAS SILENCE

Walter de la Mare's Last Interview

SHORTLY after his eighty-third birthday I wrote to Walter de la Mare to ask if I might visit him and have a discussion about his stories and verse for children. I explained that the August issue of the *Journal of Education* was to be devoted to the subject of children's reading and writing, and that I would suggest taking a tape recording of our talk, so that I could reproduce our exact words rather than write up my subsequent impressions of what we said. His reply came within a few days, typed on bright blue paper:

Dear Mr. Ford,

My recent eighty-third birthday has overflowed into a large pond of correspondence; variegated with water-lilies! And I hope you will forgive so many days' delay in thanking you for your letter of the 24th and for the two copies of the *Journal of Education*, which I have not yet read, but have read *in* with great interest. I can hardly believe that any writer to whom you might suggest an interview for the *Journal* could know less about education than I do. But because one *knows* less about education than I actually do, it by no means follows that one doesn't delight in discoursing about it; and my absurd and possibly favourite heresy is that we arrive in this world completely—potentially—well educated, and that the rest of our lives should be spent in discovering, by hook or by crook, what that implies.

Needless to say, then, I should be delighted to have a talk with you on the subject if you can accept an ignoramus more or less gladly. It might not be convenient to you to come soon, and alas, I have a good many visitors and engagements to face. Do you think we might arrange a provisional afternoon for tea in good time for August. I cannot get out myself, but should be delighted if you could come to me.

Thank you very much again for your proposal.

Yours sincerely,
WALTER DE LA MARE

Later I wrote again to arrange a date for our meeting and, in view of his remarks about discoursing on education, repeated that "I do not suppose we need talk overmuch about education unless you feel inclined. I rather thought we might keep to your own writings for children." He replied:

Dear Mr. Ford,

Thank you very much for your letter. I think perhaps the sooner the better for our talk—if it's all one to you. I've plenty of free days.... Would *you* suggest a day..... Any such arrangement, alas, depends on how I am; and that condition is rather variable.

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However, I shall look forward very much to seeing you; and if perhaps you could suggest any particular subjects that we can talk about (within my narrow orbit), I should be the better prepared.

Yours sincerely,
WALTER DE LA MARE

P.S.: I have what seems to me to be two very remarkable poems written by children of fourteen and under, but they are still in strict copyright, though you might like to share them. I still recall the image-memory of one of the pages of my first spelling book—C-A-T: D-O-G. But pictures of the same period are far easier to recall. There are a good many examples of "youthful" and childhood poems in *Early One Morning*. One, I remember, by Charles Kingsley, dictated, I think, when he was about five, seems to surpass the whole of his later work. I wonder if "Crossing the Bar" came nearer to surpassing the whole of Tennyson's earlier work. The difficulty seems to me to discover the essential difference that age usually implies; and this is also curiously true of handwriting. Forgive my rambling on like this.

With all good wishes,
Your sincerely,
W. DE LA MARE

So a meeting was arranged in June. Once again I outlined the agenda for our talk: "The one particular subject I have in mind is *your own* writings for children, poetry, and prose. And I would be very happy, if it were possible, to discuss this quite autobiographically: how did you come to write for children, what kind of poetry and stories do you believe children like (this might well raise the question of what kind of poems and stories you yourself remember having liked as a child), and which poem and story of yours do you feel to be your most successful? I am sure we will not keep to this limited agenda, but at least I hope that it may provide the skeleton of what we talk about."

Somewhat doubtful, by now, that I would get anything strictly relevant to the August issue of the *Journal of Education*, or how to deal with the matter if I didn't, I set off to my appointment. I had to pick up the tape-recorder on the way, and the assistant in the shop assembled it and packed it away so slowly that I already began to concoct implausible excuses for arriving late. However, I caught my train, and as we ran out towards the western suburbs and two sincere young men discussed whether they would be eligible to join their local golf club as country members, I sat re-reading de la Mare's continuation of the story of Jack the Giant Killer, which he calls *Dick and the Beanstalk*, and which tells how Dick, who lived in Gloucestershire alone with his father, was brought up on the tales an old working woman used to tell him "on dark windy nights in the winter". These tales not only stayed in Dick's head, but *lived* there, so much so that he came to explore them further and had his own conclusions about which finger Aladdin wore his ring on, and the colour of his uncle the Magician's eyes, and "if he found out that Old Mother Hubbard had a cat he could tell you the cat's name. And he could describe the crown that Molly Whuppie was crowned with when she became queen, even to the last emerald." For Dick, as de la Mare puts it, "was what is called a *lively* reader." I wondered whether Walter de la Mare had also been a *lively* reader when he was Dick's age, and I remember thinking at the same time that his own tales, many of them fairy tales retold or continued beyond their original endings, would probably not appeal very much to the children of our comics and T.V. age, for they seem to demand unusually *lively* readers. At any rate, Dick went out one day and found himself at the foot of a giant beanstalk, and so he climbed up it into the sky until "low in the heavens hung the red globe of the sun, and beneath him lay the vast saucer of the world," and he "found himself in a country of low, smooth, but very wide hills and of wide, gentle valleys." Dick eventually reaches a castle, and the gate is opened to him by a "leaden-faced woman—her head and shoulders muffled up in a shawl, and, to Dick's astonishment, only about nine feet high." He finds out that

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Jack's Giant was her great-grandfather (though "he himself would have guessed a round dozen of *greats* at least"), and with that discovery he knows for certain that he has left Gloucestershire and entered the world of his tales.

IT WAS at about this point in the story that we reached Twickenham. The taxi-driver said he had no great idea where the house could be, and even when we reached Montpelier Row, that most handsome terrace of Georgian houses running at right angles to the main road, No. 4, South End House still escaped us, as if refusing to materialise out of one of Dick's tales. At the end of Montpelier Row, however, a pair of tall gates, grown over with creeper, led into the courtyard of a tall brick house, and by its front door, though I couldn't find the name South End House, I found the name Walter de la Mare—Floors three and four. The door stood open and the bells by each name were vacant, having, no doubt, lost their push-buttons when the house lost its liveried men-servants some generations back.

On Floor three the door was opened by an informal and companionable lady who led me up a narrow staircase lined with pictures to Floor four. "You've brought a beautiful day with you," she said. "So I've got him up in his chair and he's sitting by the window in his little room. Will you have your talk first—or perhaps you'd rather begin with tea?" she went on easily.

I said that I was happy to do as she recommended. And when she asked if I had to hurry away, I answered with surprise that I was fortunately not engaged on the kind of paper that took me from one place to another at a great rate. "That's good," she replied; "He's a little slow at getting going sometimes with a strange person, so give him a few moments to get used to you."

We walked into a room that seemed to be a sitting-room, though something about its appearance, about its arrangement rather than the look of the individual pieces, gave it an air of being sat in only by people waiting to move on elsewhere; and so through to a minute little room that was all windows, being on the corner of the house. It contained a tall cupboard full of books, an occasional table or two, a gramophone on the floor, and finally, seated in a wheel-chair that occupied what was left of the floor space, Mr. Walter de la Mare.

"So we're going to talk about education, are we?" he said, getting going at once. "I don't know anything about education, but that's all to the good, *you* can talk into your machine instead. I'll listen."

He spoke in a deep, flowing voice, whereas I had an impression of having heard him over the radio speaking in a high voice, much more like E. M. Forster's. How had I got this wrong, I wondered? But then, I also had expected to find him small and bird-like, and here he was, appearing, as he sat in his chair, to be large-built and with a big head on wide shoulders. I remembered that I had once seen Mr. Forster in a bathing costume and dressing-gown on the beach at Aldeburgh, and that I had been quite unable to admit that it was he because he seemed altogether on too big a scale.

Miss Saxton, in the meantime, had been testing a table lamp into which I plugged the tape-recorder. It didn't work, but to my relief a bulb didn't work either, so the recorder was exonerated, and Miss Saxton crawled down on to the floor behind the wheel-chair and plugged it into an inaccessible floor-socket. I had hoped, one always hopes, to avoid these elaborate mechanical preparations, and I feared Walter de la Mare would be put out of humour before we began. But Miss Saxton chatted easily about the faulty plug and having had it mended not long since, and he answered her mildly, trying to turn in his chair, and then went on:

"We had a lady here recently from . . . oh, what's that body, it's got branches in all the main countries abroad? Yes, that's it, the British Council, of course. She was such a nice person, and she came with one of those tape-recorders and it refused to work, it wouldn't even start—perhaps you fixed it into that dud lamp, my dear. She was so upset, the poor girl, and they had tested it before she came,

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but it was no good. We were so sorry for her, but she couldn't be consoled."

I found this an uneasy story until my own machine winked into life and the reel began to turn steadily. I sat the microphone on the table between us and tried to forget it. De la Mare didn't appear to have noticed it. He sat looking gently out of the open window in front of us.

"Those trees are a wonderful sight on a day like this, aren't they?" he said, without any trace of ecstasy. From our fourth floor window we looked out at their dark upper branches and the mixed greens of their spring leaves. "Do you imagine trees can communicate with each other? It seems incredible, as we watch them rooted there by each other, that they shouldn't be able to communicate some kind of sympathetic life."

He seemed to expect me to reply, but I was too little prepared for so calm an eccentricity as this to feel able to go with him as yet. So I asked him if he knew the names of trees from growing up among them as a child, for he seemed very familiar with them in his writing. But he said no, he had no natural inheritance of this kind, though he had lived a good deal from one time to another in the country. I mentioned how Lawrence had seemingly always known, as if by untutored instinct, the names of flowers and plants and trees, and de la Mare at once envied him his intimacy, though for all his words I couldn't detect any envy in his tone. He sat, we both sat, looking out at the branches and at the park below, and I asked him about his encounters with Lawrence.

"It's most extraordinary," he replied, without answering; "the other day I found that I had two or three of his letters tucked away, and I had entirely forgotten them. You'd hardly believe it, would you, that one could forget about letters from Lawrence."

I said I was indeed surprised, because Lawrence's letters were so unmistakably his own, even the most trivial of them conveying a feeling of the man.

"These weren't in the least revealing in themselves," de la Mare checked me. "I was a reader for a publisher and these were purely business letters, about some poems he was submitting to us. But I kept them and forgot about them, though now that seems hard to believe because you can't forget Lawrence, even if it was only a slight contact like that."

PERHAPS because of having to change the tape, or perhaps because such was his mood, we drifted away to another topic, to my regret, because as he was speaking I vaguely remembered references to de la Mare among Lawrence's early letters, references that were friendly and appreciative. Later I looked them up and found that Lawrence had been writing to him about a book of his poems that de la Mare had selected—"It won't be a big book—rather a smallish one—a bit exquisite, the collection—*à la* de la Mare—to convince the critics I was well brought up, so to speak." Lawrence seemed to expect rather more than was reasonable, for after de la Mare's selection had been published, Lawrence wrote to Edward Garnett from Italy: "I am anxious down to my vitals about the poems. I thought my friends in the field—de la Mare and so on—would review them decently for us. God help us." Still, in the same month he himself wrote, in a review, of "Mr. de la Mare's perfect appreciation of life at still moments." Certainly de la Mare seemed to have retained, after forty-four years, a feeling of deep respect for Lawrence —even though, as Lawrence wrote, he once "took me to task for my unbusinesslike reply."

Lawrence and de la Mare are not names one would have spontaneously brought together. And yet de la Mare's conversation every now and then took on a Lawrentian idiom. For instance, we were talking about his stories (it had taken me much time and ingenuity to get him to this topic), and he observed that "I've got quantities of stories in my head that I've never found the occasion to write down." He paused, and sat looking over towards the trees; and then asked, in a half rhetorical tone of voice: "Now, why did I say they were in my *head*? Really, that's a most unlikely place for them, isn't it? They

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are much more likely to be in the solar plexus, I should think. Come to that, I wonder if they are anywhere at all? It may be quite an illusion that I could bring forth all these stories."

So I suggested his trying to bring one forth into the microphone, and he took to the proposal with a certain jocular enthusiasm and said I should come back with my machine one day and we would try. "But will you let me prepare it beforehand? or must I do it straight out—impromptu?" He was quite anxious about it, as if we were discussing a game with fixed rules. "Still, I don't suppose it would be too hard," he continued more easily. "Once you get started, you can't stop. We are on a landing together, a rather long, shaded landing. At one end there's a great dark door, and it looks as if it would have to be an important occasion for anyone to go up and open it. But on this early summer evening we are walking down the landing . . . oh, it's all too easy, isn't it? When my children were small they used to make me tell them stories, and they went on night after night—you couldn't credit the tangles we got into by the end of an evening. But somehow they unravelled themselves by the next day. Not that they were very good stories, but the children seemed to like them. Or perhaps they just liked them better than going to bed. I suppose your children go to bed like clockwork?" he asked, for sooner or later he was always asking me into the topic, as it were.

But I contrived to shift him back by saying that I had often wondered whether children who were read to aloud, or who had stories recited to them, came to develop different attitudes and reading habits from the children who from a young age tended to read to themselves silently. De la Mare thought it over briefly and remarked that he couldn't say anything about that. The main thing was to get them reading as naturally as breathing.

Myself: "Perhaps what one wants is for them to become like Dick, who was 'what is called a *lively* reader'?"

De la Mare (eagerly): "Yes, that's right. He was a *very* lively reader, wasn't he?"

F.: "I think *Dick and the Beanstalk* is one of your most delightful stories."

De la M.: "Really! I'm so glad you've read it; it's one of the ones I like best. And that fearful old woman—she's a wonderful character, isn't she? Terrifying! I always like her."

F.: "Did you ever notice that you'd made her only half the height of that feeble husband of hers—nine feet to his eighteen?"

De la M.: "Is that so? Are you sure?"

F.: "Yes, I am. But I don't think it's important. I'm more intrigued to find her so real a creation for you."

De la M.: "One's characters become quite frightening, often, certainly very real."

I asked if he saw them as real before starting to write.

De la M.: "I suppose it varies. But usually not, I'd say. Often one begins without seeing anything much, and then whatever it is, wherever it comes from, grows shapely before your eyes. Henry James, when he'd been writing a story for a bit, became on intimate terms with his characters, more so, I'm sure, than with most of the people around him."

F.: "Though often his characters stemmed directly from the people around him, didn't they?"

De la M.: "Yes, they did indeed. But would you say that Dickens's characters were people he'd seen before, and lived among?"

F.: "I think one assumes so. But they've become much more living by the time he's created them, though of course it's a different kind of life, just as they have become something more than characters."

De la M.: "I don't know about this business of characters, now I come to think about it. Shakespeare, people are for ever saying, created a whole world of characters. But I don't find them very convincing in that respect. You can't call Macbeth a character. He's more like a walking shadow. . . . .

> It is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
> Signifying nothing.

What does that mean? I don't think an idiot could tell a tale, could he? And yet 'signify-

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ing nothing' doesn't mean that it didn't signify anything; it means that it signifies *nothing*, *nothingness*, a world of nothingness."

DURING these remarks, which were said tentatively and as if he were thinking over them for the first time, Miss Saxton came to the door, and she now asked us if we would care to go to tea—she had originally proposed tea after half an hour. But de la Mare was clearly in no mood to break off, so she brought him brandy and me whisky instead. I pulled down the blind, for the sun had moved round to the side-window and seemed to worry him. After these interruptions, I said something about the apparent popularity of his poetry, and asked him whether this ever surprised him.

De la M.: "I don't really know. People do seem to like 'The Listeners,' don't they? At least I suppose they like it, because they are always writing to ask what it means. But what can one answer to that sort of question?"

F.: "Do *you* know what it means?"

De la M.: "Yes, I know what it means. But I'm not going to start giving you or anyone else a prose meaning, because that wouldn't be what the *poem* means. The meaning's in the poem itself, or it's nowhere. And if it's not in the poem, then it's certainly not worth bothering about."

F.: "If you will allow me to say it, I don't think 'The Listeners' is one of your best poems. It's a pity that the ambiguity in the poem has done so much to put it into every anthology, because it must have given people a rather lop-sided view of your poetry."

De la M.: "So that's what you think, is it?"

These words were said genially enough, but with the finality of a door closed. So I made as if to leave the subject of his poetry, but of his own accord he suddenly returned to it, and recounted with amusement how he had recently been invited to contribute a poem on William Blake for some collection designed to celebrate the two hundredth anniversary of his birth next year. "I dug among my papers and, sure enough, I came upon a poem I had written a long time ago—it seems almost like two hundred years ago—about an imaginary genius, so I sent that along with an appropriate title. I really couldn't produce a new poem on Blake, and anyway this one might have been done specially. For would you believe it? I had said something in the poem about the man's age when he died, and it was quite correct, or near enough. So there's my poem on Blake for you!" he ended with almost a flourish.

F.: "And what about your poems for children? That's really what we're supposed to be talking about."

De la M.: "Well, you go on and talk about them, then. Or better still, talk about what *you* write. You do write, don't you?" [I contrived to avoid this diversion.] "Anyway, what d'you call my poems for children? They are all just poems, as far as I'm concerned. If children like them, then I'm happy, for they are much one's best public, aren't they?"

F.: "That's an interesting remark, because I have felt that many of your children's poems (at any rate, the poems publishers print as if for children) are not at all easy, they demand a considerable verbal understanding."

De la M.: "Yes, I know they do. And some asinine people try to simplify them. I gave someone a poem recently and she wanted to change some word, because, she said, the children wouldn't understand it. Can you believe it? I *was* cross. How will children get to know words or anything else, I asked her, if they never meet them for the first time? I suppose she had her modern theories, but I can't say I thought much of them."

We talked a little about "modern theories" of teaching children to read, and then he was off again, almost vehemently: "What are we really talking about? It's just impudence to suppose we can *teach* children in any important sense: they already know far better than we how to feel and respond; they look about them with astonishment. Look at these two pictures"; and he indicated two small-framed water-colours that I had been looking at off and on ever since we began, for they were resting on the window-seat immediately in

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front of us. One of them was of a face entwined with vine branches and bunches of grapes, like a detail from a stone carving; the other was a flatly-painted horizontal landscape. "They are by the same person—would you believe that? She's an American friend of mine. This one of the child was done when she was only a child herself: it's not just alive, but there's something mysterious in that face, in those eyes, isn't there? It's a lovely face. As for the other one, it's all right, very competent, I like it in its way. But something has disappeared, something that teaching may have banished, for all we can tell. Now, you can teach *dogs*, I know that. Perhaps that's why I don't really like dogs."

THIS last remark was prompted, I imagine, by two dogs playing below in the fields, well-groomed, well-modulated dogs, but just at present thoroughly dog-like too. Our conversation remained unhurried; indeed, it rambled a good deal more than I have indicated, but with such an unusual sense of moving as it wished that I was unable, even reluctant, to hold it up and develop some single point. Repeatedly de la Mare seemed to return to children and to enjoy talking about them, about my children and his own grandchildren. But he seemed to have no particular enthusiasm for discussing his writings or his biography, and I was unwilling to press him because I had a feeling that his reluctance to talk about himself was simply a natural reticence with a stranger. At one point, though, he did say something about himself as an old man: "When you get to my sort of age—how old are you, by the way?" he asked, interrupting himself. "How old would you say?" I replied. He looked surprised; and then, after a moment, said, "D'you know, I wouldn't have any idea, really! At any rate," he went back to his first words, "it's when you get to my age that you realise how much time you've wasted, hurrying and worrying. It's wonderfully restful not to be able to hurry any more, and also to have given up worrying." He sat in his wheel-chair, in pyjamas and dressing-gown, having come to rest, as it were, and with a visible "appreciation of life at still moments" as he spoke towards the open window.

"We all need far more silence than we get," he went on; "we need to learn how to *listen* to silence.... Still, I don't know at all what I do when it's silent. I'm sure I don't *think*!"

F.: "It's rare to be able to think silently, in a clear, logical way, as distinct from letting ideas ramble through one's head."

De la M.: "There's nothing wrong with that. I always think my main skill is to have a talent for digression"—a comment that seemed at once to amuse him.

"What's that bird—there, among that cluster of darker leaves?" he asked, after we had sat recording silence for a number of minutes. I, of course, had no idea, but de la Mare didn't really seem interested to know, for without bothering to pursue the matter he remarked that "the old king was a wonderful shot, I believe. At the end of a day's shooting he would have bagged hundreds of birds and his party thousands of them. Oh, what fun!" And he went on to say (rather than recite) the words of his short poem:

> Hi! handsome hunting man,
> Fire your little gun.
> Bang! Now the animal
> Is dead and dumb and done.
> Nevermore to peep again, creep again,
> leap again,
> Eat or sleep or drink again. Oh, what fun!

"Oh, what fun!" he repeated again, flatly and calmly and without passion. "Can you conceive of it? Not that hundreds or dozens alter the case; one is just the same. But equally I don't suppose the king would have been able to conceive what the poem's about. I'm sure he wasn't much good at spotting irony. He'd probably simply have agreed: Yes, it was; first-rate fun."

This became quite a protracted conversation about myxomatosis and de la Mare clearly found the whole business incomprehensibly cruel, just as he found himself unable to think of children's literature without its rabbits. (During this discussion, the last of the four tapes wound itself on to its final

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spool, and I prayed he would not now say his most profound saying and it be unrecorded.) Suddenly, he switched the topic, though the link was too close for this to be a digression, and asked if I were opposed to capital punishment. He sounded unexpectedly challenging. I said that I was indeed an abolitionist, and had even campaigned for abolition. "Are you, now?" de la Mare said, unsurprised. "I suppose you'll think it more than odd, after me going on about killing birds and rabbits, but I'm not against capital punishment, not at all. Why are you for abolition?"

I suspect the discussion would have become gently passionate, but Miss Saxton came in at this moment and said we must eat tea—it was now 6.30, at least. "So you're on to capital punishment again, are you?" she said lightly. And later, at tea, de la Mare himself came back to the topic and said we ought to get some other people to join us—"not that we'll settle the matter by numbers, I don't suppose."

Tea was taken in a large, white, corner-room beyond the untenanted sitting-room, and it proved a most genial occasion. Miss Saxton pushed the wheel-chair up to the table and de la Mare sat with a piece of bread and butter in front of him—"He won't eat it," Miss Saxton said, "though he always thinks he may." He smiled towards her and promised to eat a piece of her cake at least. The talk, which, as I remember it, was predominantly on domestic matters, was animated and even jolly. De la Mare seemed to live easily and without restraint in the present, in a milieu of growing children and foreign girls living *au pair*, of cake and tea, of moving to this house in Twickenham, of the difficulty of finding a pair of slippers tight enough to stay on and yet sufficiently loose to be comfortable—humdrum topics, I suppose, yet neither trivial nor perfunctory. De la Mare's conversation seemed to have the knack of "bringing to life," and his participation was immediate and unrestrained. And above all, it had nothing of the "old man" about it, let alone of the "grand old man." "The difficulty seems to me to discover the essential difference that age usually implies," he had written in his letter, and in his own case the difference seemed likely (at least to a stranger who had not known him younger) to be a matter of having come to a physical halt and to have found it possible to concentrate his life into the upper floor of this tall house in a park. Inevitably, this placed him at the centre of his life and of all that it involved, just as his individuality of outlook and reflection, his talent for the digression, made the conversation very largely *his* conversation. Yet he remained unassuming, undominating, as if simply one among others.

HE HAD eaten his promised piece of cake and tea was finished—it was about 7.15 p.m.—when he said, "I'm tired, my dear; I think I must go to bed before long."

"I'm sure you must be tired after all that talking," Miss Saxton replied. "Still, it's better for you sitting up in your chair, isn't it? It's easier than trying to talk sitting up in bed, I'm sure."

"Is it?" He seemed unconvinced. Miss Saxton asked me to help her and we moved the chair to the day-bed. She put de la Mare's legs up on the bed in front of him and we helped him change his position—"It's his legs that have gone," she remarked in a matter-of-fact way. I had an uneasy sense of having stayed far too long, of having kept him up, though I could not imagine how I could have left earlier without discourtesy. De la Mare, however, was apparently not inclined to bring our conversation to an end. He made some singularly unenthusiastic comment on a recent book of Aldous Huxley's that was lying on the bed, and some wholly gratified comments on a manuscript anthology of his poems that he had received for his birthday from a form of children in a primary school —as it happened, I knew the school, and, sure enough, the italic writing of all the children.

He asked me to tell him about F. R. Leavis, and enquired if there were an account of his work, perhaps one or two of his essays, that would convey the outlook and quality of his

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criticism. He told a story about a storm that had struck one of the trees outside the window, and yet had left it standing and alive. And of a sudden he asked me if I wouldn't like to hear a record of one of Bach's organ toccatas. I replied that this must really await my next visit, when I came to record his stories.

"Ah, yes, I'll have to think about that, it's an amusing idea," he said. "And what are you going to do with the present recording of our talk? I suppose you couldn't make it into a gramophone record? It would go well with the Bach."

I said this would indeed be possible, though it remained to be seen if our talk would merit being reproduced in any way. Moreover, I added, I found it hard to imagine him playing his way through the 100 minutes of a dead conversation.

"Who says it's dead? Conversations don't die, they are far less mortal than the likes of us," he replied in his jocular way.

I said my thanks and farewells once again and, promising to return, left him with his legs up, gazing out of the window at the evening light and waiting, without any impatience, to be helped to his bed. Miss Saxton showed me out. "I think he seems to have enjoyed himself, doesn't he? He oughtn't to talk so much, but you simply can't stop him at times. And who would want to, anyway? He's wonderful, isn't he?" she said, in her straightforward fashion.

Two hours later, at home, I unpacked the recorder, plugged it in, and played our "immortal" conversation over to my wife. The tape unwound itself steadily, and we sat listening . . . to silence. At first I thought the play-back mechanism was faulty and that we were simply unable, for the moment, to extract the conversation from the tape. We fiddled and switched on and off, but very uneasily, in case we wiped the tape clean. And then we sat and listened once more. We were not very lively listeners. At the shop the next day they found that the machine had been switched on for recording telephone conversation. To ordinary conversation it was dead.

A day or two later I wrote to Walter de la Mare telling him of the fiasco and expressing my apologies as best I could. No article: no gramophone record: none the less, I only hoped that it was not a wholly wasted meeting and conversation. After a short delay he wrote back:

Dear Mr. Ford,

Many thanks for your letter of June 4th. I am not sure that in some respects "the rest was silence" is not an advantage, and especially to the *Journal*. However, we took a long time to talk the silence, and a lot of that was my reward.

The only practical disadvantage of the blank tape is that even talking nowadays, alas, makes me rather tired, and it is not easy to fit things in. I will keep the suggestion that I made to you in mind, but I fancy it would be very difficult to carry out.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

WALTER DE LA MARE

And so it proved, for within a few days he had died, and all that remained of this encounter was a silent tape and the memory of a conversation "less mortal than the likes of us."

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A. R. Vidler

The Crisis in Theology

ONE day during the 1930s when a Cambridge theologian was walking by the Divinity School—the headquarters of the theological faculty in the university—he was passed by an anthropologist and a psychologist walking in the opposite direction. As they passed, the theologian heard the anthropologist say to the psychologist: "You know, within fifty years we shall be in there." It is a parable of what then seemed possible, and indeed is still possible, though there are as yet no evident signs that the existence of theological faculties is coming to be attacked as an archaism.

When the ancient universities were preserves of the Church of England, it was natural that there should be Professors of Divinity and that they should be accorded a position of precedence. But now that all our universities justly pride themselves upon their freedom, and in particular are free from religious tests, theological faculties would seem to be an anomalous survival. The theologians themselves, though for obvious reasons they want theological faculties to continue, are by no means agreed about their *raison d'être*. A recent Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford declared that the purpose of a theological faculty is to train ministers of religion, whereas the present Regius Professor at Cambridge has expressed the hope that the faculty of divinity there will never consent to be treated as "a seminary for ordinands."

There is this to be said for the Oxford view, that nearly all students of theology in universities are candidates for ordination or intending specialists in the teaching of divinity in schools, just as nearly all university teachers of theology are ministers of one or other of the churches and so are professionally committed to maintaining the truth of Christianity. But why should Christianity be privileged in free universities, and why should the training of Christian propagandists benefit from the largesse with which the State sustains university education? Why should not the upholders of other philosophies of life—humanists, positivists, and communists, for example—also have fair shares? It is not easy to see the answer to these questions.

If, on the other hand, it is claimed, as at Cambridge, that the function of theological teachers is not to maintain the truth of Christianity but to convey a knowledge of its history, and that this can be done with the same objectivity and freedom from bias as are required in all other academic teachers, then different, but no less awkward, questions arise. In genuinely free and non-confessional universities where neither teachers nor students should be tied to any one set of beliefs, should not Christianity be studied purely as an historical phenomenon and in relation to other religions and cultures, i.e. as part of the comparative study of religions? Then most of what is at present called theology or divinity could be treated as what it really is, namely, a department of historical studies. What could not thus be subsumed

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under the study of history could be taken over by other faculties. The teaching of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin could be supplied by the appropriate language faculties, and in so far as theology embarks upon a constructive or systematic, as distinguished from a purely historical, study of ethical and religious ideas, the philosophers should be able to provide what is needed. On these grounds as well as on grounds of economy a good case could be made out for the liquidation of theological faculties as separate institutions.

However, no one in or out of theological faculties seems at present to be contemplating this possibility. So far from existing faculties being threatened with dissolution into their component parts, new ones are being founded and built up in modern universities. It is all very incongruous and puzzling, like the illogical ways of other English institutions to which we are accustomed. Happily, although theological faculties in universities are the most obvious centres of theological activity in England and are presumably the nurseries of future theologians, the future of theology can be considered without regard to the academic puzzles which we have so far been noticing and which have left us in the dark about what, if anything, makes theology a distinct intellectual discipline and field of investigation.

DEFINITIONS may be the refuge of third-rate minds, but they can be useful in helping us to ascertain what we are supposed to be talking about. The dictionary indicates clearly enough what biology is, and zoology, and geology, and anthropology. What then does it say theology is? "The study or science which treats of God, His nature and attributes, and His relations with man and the universe" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). It sounds a pretty tall and all-embracing order. I can introduce, right away, one limiting factor. The *Oxford English Dictionary* definition, as it stands, might be taken to apply to Mohammedan or Hindu, as well as to Christian, theology. I have no competence to write about the past, let alone the future, of Mohammedan or Hindu theology; I can deal only with Christian theology, i.e. theology as it has been understood and studied by Christians.

The most striking thing about Christian theology, or rather Christian theologians, is their confidence—which is in the nature of a presupposition — that the *Theos* or God, from whom theology derives its name, has revealed himself or made himself known to human beings, and indeed that he does so still. It is held that he reveals himself not only in the passive sense in which a sunset may be said to reveal itself to a poet or an artist, but actively by taking the initiative. Theology presupposes that God is Person or Subject and acts as such, and that he is not merely a thing or an object. It follows that, if theologians are to be faithful to this presupposition of their study, they will not be content with the methods of abstraction, analysis, and classification employed by other sciences. "The business of academic man," Dr. Austin Farrer has said, "is to master his subject-matter, and religion presents a subject-matter which, by her own admission, can never be mastered." We miss much of the truth, perhaps the most important truth, about a human person if we regard him as a thing or an object and do no more than study in abstraction from one another the various elements in his make-up, if we break him up or break him down, so to speak, or if we treat him as just one of a class. By these methods we may get to know a lot *about* him, without ever getting to know him as a unique individual and without ever taking in what he has to say to us. *A fortiori* that must apply to God as he is conceived by theology. It may be incredible that God is personal and knowable as persons are knowable, but the presupposition that he is so is what makes theology a distinct study or science, and it is also what gives theology an interest different from that of history or philosophy or ethics. Only if this essential presupposition of theology is taken seriously, can it have a contemporary importance and a future worthy of consideration.

But there is a further point that must be made about this essential presupposition of

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theology. The presupposition is not only that there is a Supreme Being who is capable of making himself known to mankind, but that in fact he has done so, above all through his dealings with a particular people (the Hebrews) and in a particular course of events which culminated in the "advent" or coming of Jesus Christ. This again may be incredible, and is certainly scandalous to all who suppose that, if there were a God who could reveal himself, he ought to have done so universally and simultaneously to the whole human race. The offensive character of the belief that God has entrusted a revelation, which should be for all men, to a "peculiar" people (the Hebrews before Christ, the Christians after Christ) is frankly acknowledged by perceptive theologians: they call it "the scandal of particularity." But it is this belief—this presupposed belief—that distinguishes theology from the general history of religions and from metaphysics: it is this that gives it its distinct or peculiar interest.

THEOLOGY then is the study or science which consists in investigating all that is involved in the essential theological presupposition. While it includes assertions about history which must be examined by the most rigorous methods of historical criticism, it includes much else besides. We cannot here survey the development of theology from the Bible onwards, but in order to take the measure of the crisis in which theology is at present involved, and upon which the resolution of its future will depend, it is necessary to recall what has happened during the last two centuries.

Two hundred years ago and even more recently, nearly all theologians, as well as the whole body of Christians, took for granted, not only that a Divine Revelation had been given, but also that it was finally fixed in an inerrant book, the Holy Bible. Catholic and Protestant theologians shared this assumption: their differences concerned the question where the divinely appointed authority for interpreting the Bible was to be found—in tradition, the creeds, the consensus of the Fathers of the Church, the pronouncements of General Councils, the decisions of the Popes, or the testimony of the individual conscience informed by the Holy Spirit. There was plenty here to argue about and to provide matter for sectarian disputations. The point is that all shared the assumption, which they looked upon as absolutely firm standing-ground, that the Bible was a holy island in the ocean of secular literature, exempt from the scrutiny of profane minds. What has happened during the last two centuries is that this assumption, with which the essential theological presupposition had come to be identified, has been made untenable. It has been undermined.

The undermining process was a complex one, as in the case of other traditional beliefs. I will mention three of the things that shattered the basis of what may conveniently be called "traditional orthodoxy." First, the literary and historical criticism of the Bible, and its comparison with other ancient literatures, destroyed the notion that it is a holy island in the ocean of secular literature, or that there is a sharp dichotomy between what is sacred and secular and between what is natural and supernatural. Secondly, well-established discoveries made through the natural and human sciences showed that the Bible contains many mistaken statements and that belief in its inerrancy is no longer tenable. Thirdly, the disintegration of traditional philosophy, whether scholastic or Cartesian, and its displacement by other philosophies—empirical, immanentist, positivist, etc.—resulted in there no longer being any common and congenial framework of ideas or universe of discourse within which the Bible could be interpreted and theological beliefs could be commended.

THEOLOGIANS and their followers have reacted to these solvents in, roughly speaking, three ways. First, there have been those who have said *non possumus* to all that conflicted with traditional orthodoxy, and have determined to make no concessions to disturbing facts or to dangerous thoughts. At least, they have made only minor concessions and adjustments, and then with the utmost

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reluctance and at the latest possible date. Often this kind of reaction, usually called "fundamentalist," is very crudely expressed, but sometimes it is maintained with much subtlety, as for example when Roman Catholic theologians defend their official doctrine of the inerrancy of the Bible.

Secondly, at the opposite extreme, there have been theologians who have not only acquiesced in the undermining of traditional orthodoxy, but have themselves played a leading part in the undermining operations. There have even been those who embraced modern discoveries and ideas with such enthusiasm and wholeheartedness that they sacrificed the essential presupposition of theology in the process, i.e. the scandal of particularity. A recent Nonconformist writer has remarked that "with the passing of the old standardised, proof-text theology, the drift of Nonconformist liberalism was toward a vague humanism informed with Hegelian metaphysics and inspired with dreams of social progress." And in a book on *The Kingdom of God in America* it was noted that "a God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross." In other words, the suggestion is that these theologians, whom the "fundamentalists" call "modernists" or "liberals" or worse names if they can think of them, in effect empty out the baby with the bath water.

Thirdly, between these two extremes, there has been a large variety of mediating theologians who have believed that they could adhere to, and vindicate, the essential theological presupposition, while interpreting the Bible by the ordinary canons of literary and historical criticism, accepting all well-established scientific discoveries, and being philosophically open-minded. These mediating theologians have probably been more in evidence in Britain than elsewhere: partly owing to our native genius for compromise and for steering middle courses, and also, in the case of Anglican theologians, owing to the circumstance that, however much they might be carried away by the radical theories of continental scholars when in their studies and their lecture-rooms, they still had, when they went to church or chapel, to use and make sense of the *Book of Common Prayer* in which there is no getting away from the essential presupposition of theology.

Perhaps I ought to note a fourth type of reaction to the undermining of traditional orthodoxy, namely the reaction to "modernist" or "liberal" theology which is sometimes called "neo-orthodoxy" and is associated principally with the names of Professors Karl Barth and Emil Brunner. But this is only a special example of what I call a mediating theological position. The learned American "fundamentalist" theologian, Dr. Cornelius van Til, has—quite rightly from his point of view—attacked Barth and Brunner as "the New Modernists"!

The question about the future of theology can now be formulated thus: If theology has a future, is it likely to lie with the "fundamentalists," with the "modernists," with the mediating theologians, or with none of them? All theologians have their hopes about the answer to this question: no one can know the answer. I will content myself with a few comments on the possible answers. It must be borne in mind that, if theology is to have a future at all comparable with its past, it has an immense amount of lost ground that it must recover; especially it will have to re-engage the interest of educated laymen and to get on to speaking-terms with scientists, philosophers, and all kinds of men of action, most of whom are at present on or beyond the frontiers of the churches.

THE future of theology is unlikely to be in the hands of the "fundamentalists" unless the flight to religion combined with the flight from reason, of which Billy Graham's crusades are symbolic, spreads much further than it has done yet. Even so, it would not be an imposing or a protracted future, if there is any foundation for the maxim, "*Magna est veritas, et praevalet.*" It is a fact that Billy Graham recently conducted a mission in the university church at

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Cambridge under high ecclesiastical (though not academic) patronage, and there is nowadays a good deal of "fundamentalist" religion in the student world, not least among medical students. But we may doubt whether much importance need be attached to what may be only an undergraduate mood or fashion.

The future of theology is unlikely to rest with the "modernists," not because their thinking is too radical or revolutionary, but because, as I have already suggested, they tend to sacrifice the essential presupposition of theology on the inadequately criticised altar of "modern thought." If people in future want theology at all, they are likely to want the real thing, that is, a theology that can speak with conviction, and carry conviction, about a God who has revealed himself as the Judge and Deliverer of mankind, and upon whom the origin and destiny of the race manifestly depend.

Does the future then lie with the mediating theologians? This also seems unlikely. The ablest of them are to be found in the universities and, as we have seen, they are there chiefly employed in instructing candidates for the ministry and teachers of divinity. Academic theologians may carry conviction to their pupils and supply their needs. But few of them have so far shown a capacity for convincing laymen engaged in other disciplines and walks of life that theology has anything to say to them or to do with them. Yet theology, if its presupposition is valid, is a subject that must vitally concern everyone. No one in his senses will suppose that there is a God who has revealed himself only for the benefit of clergymen and teachers of divinity. Actually, our university faculties of theology, as at present constituted, would provide little or no scope for theologians qualified to show what their subject had to do with the problems and decisions that confront laymen in the public and private life of the work-a-day world. I do not know where theologians so qualified—for example, Reinhold Niebuhr, or Paul Tillich in the U.S.A., or the late Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Germany, or that remarkable woman Simone Weil—could be placed in an English university faculty of theology. Even if there were such places available, there are few, if any, English theologians who would be capable of occupying them.

If theology is to have a future of any consequence, we may hazard the conjecture that it will have to cease to be an almost clerical monopoly. It will have to win the interest of laymen. It will have to command their intellectual respect and to capture their imagination and then give them free scope to take the lead in theological thinking, and by laymen I do not mean men already in the pew. There have been notable lay theologians in the past, for instance, Dr. Johnson and William Blake in the 18th century, and in the 19th century S. T. Coleridge, R. H. Hutton, editor of *The Spectator*, and J. H. Shorthouse, the industrialist and novelist, not to mention some Victorian prime ministers.

My forecast is that, if there is a revival of theology, it will be primarily the work of laymen. There are in this connection not yet many, but there are a few, signs of promise. I am told that laymen are taking more interest than clergymen in the writings of Rudolf Bultmann, which are now appearing in English. Bultmann, with his radical emphasis on the need to "demythologise" the Gospel and reinterpret it in terms that at once retain its essence and make it meaningful for men living in the 20th century, is certainly on the target. Books by theologians that succeed in showing that theology has to do with the profoundest and most baffling of contemporary issues—e.g. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison*—ring bells for laymen who are quite untouched by conventional clerical theologising. It is my own experience that there is more interest in the basic theological questions, as distinguished from what is secondary or trivial, among laymen outside as well as inside the churches than there is in many clerical circles. But there is no ground here for complacency about the future of theology, nor indeed for confidence, unless there be truth in the 17th century adage that man's extremity is God's opportunity.

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NOTES FROM A DIARY

Dupes and again Dupes?

Recently a friend wrote to me that he had to admit he had been wrong, and I right, about Stalin's Russia. My first reaction was surprise. Had anyone ever believed anything Stalin ever said? The whole world, communist and anti-communist, answered No with one voice. My friend must have been singularly duped.

Second thoughts told me that it was I who was now a dupe in receiving the current impression that everyone everywhere, openly or secretly, had already thought what Krushchev said. Actually a good many people, when told so by Stalin, sincerely believed that the old Bolsheviks, and most of the Soviet generals, were traitors. But now nearly everyone believes he always believed the gospel of the Twentieth Party Congress.

Facts and Unfacts

Consider the background of facts which forms, as it were, the physiological geography of events behind our lives.

Undoubtedly these facts exist. They happened, are happening. Up there, tens of thousands of people were in slave camps near the Arctic Circle. Down there, five million Jews were incinerated.

Nevertheless, in this century, the grasp by contemporaries of such facts is extremely tenuous. Although there are revelations—the occupation of Belsen and Buchenwald by the allies in 1945, the speech of Krushchev—before these horrors were laid open and bare they arrived to us in the form of debatable abstractions. "History" seemed covered over by an ever-unwinding reel of newsprint on which one read statistical arguments about the quantity of the dead, moral arguments about the historic inevitability of mass murders, æsthetic arguments about the values of "escapist" as against those of "realist" art.

The Insensibility of the Sensitive

A sensitive, scholarly, distinguished young poet has recently published a poem containing the following lines:

The Anschluss, Guernica—all the names
At which those poets thrilled, or were afraid,
For me means schools and schoolmasters and games;
And in the process someone is betrayed.

So to a young poet, events that led to the murder of several millions of people in the most horrible ways imaginable, have percolated simply as a "movement" of older writers, against which he reacts. He is not to be blamed. Evidently this older generation only succeeded in writing work which instead of revealing, concealed the realities that lay behind "all the names." All the same, one feels that if their work conveyed so little, he might have looked up a few old newspapers or reports naked of the camouflage of "literature." And yet perhaps past news would not have helped. However one looks at the facts, one is divided from them by the unwinding newsprint on which politics, statistics, manifestos, poems, news are written.

Propaganda and Counter-propaganda

Why did so many well-intentioned (I am not concerned with the ill-intentioned) people accept the Stalin myths? The reason, I think, lies partly in the terrible facts being, at one and the same time, crushingly, inescapably monstrous, and yet inaccessible. No one except the experts readily *knows*, when they are happening, about deportations, executions, prisons. And the experts disagree.

The facts are known to exist, yet they remain vague and debatable, foggy and incalculable. People who keep on mentioning them are therefore suspect, like prophets who express a reality in terms of what is unknown, uncertain, and unreal. They are felt to introduce an element of outside chaos into a potentially ordered inner life—and this is an unpopular thing to do.

During the war I saw a good deal of an intelligent young Russian from the Soviet Embassy. Occasionally he would ask me why I was not a communist, and I would always reply "because I disapprove of concentration camps." "Oh," he would say, "but there are so many people interested in telling lies about the Soviet Union, that you do wrong to believe a word you ever read in the capitalist press." This answer was not good enough, but it was certainly the best he could have given, because it threw the onus of immorality upon another system. Moreover, because it contained a truth about that other system, it could possibly have been a sincere answer.

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The most effective form of propaganda is not advocacy of one's own values but destroying confidence in those produced by your opponent. If he already has a bad conscience, your task is all the easier.

Just-as-bad Logic

It would be interesting to explore the basic models of just-as-bad arguments. Here are some that have been used again and again.

Let A equal a democracy to which you belong. Let B equal a totalitarian power bent on destroying A. Let it be admitted that, as pious generality, we none of us approve of B (though it has certain characteristics much better than A's), and that in A life is more free (though freedom does not mean very much, really).

Now in a great many particular instances the following occurs. B has done something bad, but A, in the event, is just as bad as B. For example: Hitler breaks treaties but the allies imposed the Treaty of Versailles. Therefore they are just as bad as Hitler. Stalin had Beria, but the Americans have Senator McCarthy.

The effect of this is to deprive A of the moral right to criticise B. The moral positions of A and B cancel out—which leaves no moral argument. However, there is a moral will, and this is the will of B. Pure will becomes morality.

Another pattern of argument runs as follows: We do not like communists; but it is bad to be an anti-communist. Since anti-communists remind us why we do not like communists (a feeling that we wish to be taken for granted but unstated) we dislike anti-communists more than we dislike communists. The effectiveness of the anti-anti-position is so great that it suggests that better than propaganda is counter-propaganda, and better than counter-propaganda is counter-counter-propaganda.

The Hold on Reality

One thing our descendants will be able to say about us who are now living is that our hold on a certain social reality was—for one reason or another—extremely weak. The statisticians substitute an abstraction of numbers for the infinite extension of each separate individual; the politicians support the real needs of one group against those of another group whose real needs they deny. The religious and the poets at least strive towards reality, but too often they find themselves driven into polemics on behalf of the kind of experiences which they consider suitable for faith or for artistic creation. They are on the defensive against social or political claims which seem to threaten the religious or poetical party. A history of modern sensibility could be written in terms of such polemics: the upholders of personal or individual values defending themselves against anyone who shows signs of having a social conscience, the upholders of "the tradition" against those who take the plunge into the "unprecedented." There never was an age when so many people were so right and so wrong both at the same time. Where there should be a synthesis of opposites, there is a falling apart.

The Return to the Hypothesis of Absolutes

All the same, there is hope in recent events. The hope is not that we should all settle down to accepting a more palatable myth, but that the idea that right and wrong are entirely relative to the system in which one lives has been badly shaken. What is important is not that we have been told Stalin was a monster but that we have been told his victims were innocent. For this implies another kind of values by which they have been post-acquitted. And these values are simply ones that would be accepted by everyone everywhere. They had not done what they were accused of having done. This has suddenly become relevant. With it, truth and objectivity emerge again—badly soiled—from mud and floods. Emerging they whisper that they require guarantees and witnesses. Suddenly things like habeas corpus, the multiple party system, juries, appear in a universal light as the incarnations within human systems of such values. Truth and objectivity must slink back into the mud, unless they acquire recognised rights and institutions. Unless there are institutions guaranteeing freedom, individuals practising it, then truth and justice were only prisoners put on show for an afternoon to prove they were still alive. Perhaps the intention was just to put them on show. All the same the idea appears to have gathered force that life is intolerable unless we really act on the hypothesis that absolute values are real.

Stephen Spender

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Letter from TOKYO

Headhunters, Watersprites, and Heroes

Headhunter

I RAN into an old friend, *M*, the other day, looking well-fed and prosperous in his heavy twill overcoat and snap-brim fedora, and I felt sad about it. I suppose it sounds ungracious to begrudge a little prosperity to a friend. But I don't quite mean it that way. I am glad that he is prosperous, and I do not even object to his new sophistication. But he is no longer the earnest young man with the pathetic mission that I knew many years ago. *M* is a refugee. I know there is nothing unusual about refugees these days, but *M* is a rare specimen of the species. He is an Atayal, which is a primitive tribe in central Formosa, better known for headhunting than for anything else. And he is a refugee from his Formosan home not for any of the usual reasons—he has no strong feelings about the Nationalists or the Communists — but because he used to love the Japanese.

It is odd this late in the 20th century to hear colonialists spoken of well, but *M* remembers the Japanese with great affection. "They were our friends," he said. "They took care of us, and they loved us. Whenever we had problems we could go to them. If not for the Japanese, the Chinese merchants would have skinned us alive."

So when the Japanese were expelled in 1945, the aborigines — who number about 235,000—were unhappy. "We were willing to make friends with the Chinese," recalls *M*, "but they did nothing for us. For a long time, not a single Chinese so much as paid us a visit. They left us completely alone. Right after the war, for example, we ran short on food. In the old days, the Japanese would have helped us out. But not the Chinese. We felt deserted and lonely." Maybe the Chinese were busy establishing their new administration in Taipei; or maybe they had heard too many stories of headhunting. The Japanese had presumably stamped it out, but in the confused post-war period, headhunting was reported on the increase.

The first contact with the new government came when a Chinese official showed up in the village and recruited *M* along with several other young men for the constabulary. They were sent to school to learn police work and Mandarin Chinese; the Japanese language was forbidden.

But the Atayal were discontented. They missed the personal touch they used to get from their good friends, the Japanese. When the Japanese would come back was a frequent subject of speculation.

One night, a group of resentful young men sat around talking it over as usual. "I'm sure," said someone, "that if the Japanese knew what was going on here they would come back." If they haven't come back, it must mean that they don't know. Therefore someone must go and tell them. On sudden impulse, they decided to draw lots, and there and then *M* found himself elected to go to Japan to "tell our Japanese friends."

To leave Formosa at that time without papers was no simple matter. *M* slipped away from his school one night and hiked several score miles to the coast. The walking part was easy, but to cross the ocean to Japan was a different matter. There was no direct connection of any kind between Formosa and Japan. *M* haunted the docks watching for an opening until one night he was able to stow himself aboard a fishing-boat bound for a port in the southern Ryukyus. Once the boat

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was safely away from Formosa, *M* revealed himself to the skipper, an Okinawan, and told his tale. The skipper's national pride was touched, and he promised to help. So when they arrived, he turned him over to a friend of his, the captain of another boat bound for a more northern point in the Ryukyus. Again *M* was put under cover and this time taken to Naha, the capital city of Okinawa (which saw some of the worst fighting and devastation of the war). In Naha the obliging captain turned him over to still another Okinawan fishing-boat, this one bound for Amami Oshima, a chain of islands just off the southernmost of the Japanese home islands. At Oshima he was turned over to a Japanese fishing-boat which was bound for central Japan. Several weeks later, he was put ashore in a small boat at a point which, with symbolic appropriateness, faced directly on Mount Fuji.

WHAT had he intended to do once he reached Japan? I asked him. Sound the alarm, mount a soapbox, shout from the rooftops? He didn't know. He had only one goal: to get to the house of his friend, a former official of the Japanese Government-General in Formosa. He had memorised the address carefully, although he had no idea where it might be, nor how to get there, nor whether his friend would be there when he arrived. All he was sure about was that if his friend were there, he would help him.

I do not know how he managed to travel several hundred miles in the Occupation Japan of 1949 with neither papers nor money, but he did reach Iwate Prefecture, several hundred miles north of his landing point, without being stopped. At that moment his friend must have been the most astonished person in all of Japan. There at the entrance of his small cottage was a full-blooded Formosan aborigine, thousands of miles from home, without money or identification papers. "I have come," he said, repeating long-rehearsed words, "to ask you to help my people."

A group of "old Formosan hands" quickly rallied, in a surge of nostalgia, to help him out. But it was soon obvious that however much they might wish it otherwise, Imperial Japan and its power were no more. *M* then decided, since he could not return home for the time being, to make use of his enforced stay in Japan by going to school; he had a painful suspicion that his exile would not soon be over. His schooling, which was the equivalent of the Japanese middle-school education, was not enough to get him into medical school; so he finally entered the "political economy" course at one of Tokyo's numerous private universities. For a while he was lionised. He wrote articles in papers and magazines, he gave little talks, he was invited to gatherings. But then the novelty wore away, and *M* found himself on his own.

When I was first brought to meet him in 1949 by an anthropologist friend, *M* was a quiet modest young man, broad-shouldered and sturdy, and very Japanese looking. At the gathering where he was to be introduced, I kept looking around the room for him—I think I was expecting someone in full savage regalia, with horned headgear, loincloth, tattooing, and scalps dangling from a trophy board—when someone nudged me. The Formosan headhunter was that quiet young man serving us tea! After that I would see him from time to time. Once we went together to an ethnological museum outside of Tokyo where several Ainu—the aborigines of Japan—had come down from the north country to give a demonstration of their housebuilding techniques. *M*, already more a sophisticated Tokyoite than a Formosan headhunter, watched them closely, clucking in wonder at their primitiveness.

One night, I had a telephone call from *M*. Could he see me right away? He entered my house, which was some distance out in the suburbs, with an urgent air. I noticed an indefinable change in his manner. A friend of his, he told me, a young lady from Singapore, half Chinese and half something else, had a problem. During the war she had married a Japanese soldier and had come to Japan with him. Now—he said—her husband had deserted her and she wanted to go back home to Singapore. But she needed money, dollars. Somehow or other she had accumulated a little Japanese money, but the uncooperative authorities would not allow her to convert this into dollars for passage money. Could I help? It was with a certain sadness that I heard his "story" and felt obliged to refuse to help him with his financial operations. What was he doing now? I asked. Was he going to school? Well, not exactly,

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he answered. In a way yes, but not every day. He had quite a lot of things to do.

When I met him the other day, he had put on a little weight, his clothes were of excellent material, and he looked more Japanese than ever before.

Kappa

ONE of the surest signs that war and occupation are over and that Japan has shifted gears is the big Kappa boom. Everywhere you turn you run into him. There are Kappa cups and saucers, Kappa towels, and Kappa cufflinks. Where little American boys wear Davy Crockett sweaters, little Japanese boys wear Kappa sweaters. Bars, night-clubs, and coffee-houses call themselves "Kappa." There are Kappa books and Kappa cartoons. There are stores that specialise in Kappanalia —from junk to 200-year-old masterpieces in *ukiyoe* and *sumiboku* style. Recently one of the big department stores in Tokyo held a Kappa exhibition which was jammed by enthusiastic crowds for a whole week.

The Kappa is a water-sprite who inhabits rivers, ponds, and wells. According to Professor Ishida of Tokyo University, there are parallels for him in the folklore of other parts of the world. But what makes him attractive is that he is a sort of human without ordinary human responsibilities and restraints. He can best be described physically as a human tortoise: he wears a shell on his back, but he walks upright. A shallow dish-like depression on the top of his skull holds water, and if the water spills, he loses his strength, like Antæus who weakened when he was not touching the ground. A 17th century encyclopædia advises that, "if you meet with a Kappa, deal him a hard blow on the head and drive out the water kept there, and he will fall helpless."

His other peculiarities include the ability to change colour like a chameleon, and to draw one arm into his chest and pull the other out to twice its normal length. He is thieving and mischievous, like an energetic ten-year-old boy. But what makes him fearsome is his habit of attacking people and animals, dragging them into the water, and then plucking out their liver or sucking their blood through the anus.

The Kappa's world is a sort of para-world, and his life a sort of para-life, which have always fascinated the Japanese. In his Swiftian satire, *Kappa*, first published in 1927, Akutagawa (whose *Rashomon* became well known as a movie) used the Kappa world as a foil for his thrusts at modern life in Japan.

But the post-war Kappa is Kon Shimizu's. In his three brilliant volumes of cartoons which have appeared so far, the Kappas are used as a running commentary on Japanese life. They are a mirror-image, soft where the Japanese are hard, gentle where they are stern, spontaneous where they are stiff. They are what people would like to be if they were not afraid; they do what people would like to do but dare not. In the eternal conflict between *giri* and *ninjo*—between "duty" and "human feeling," the staple of Japanese Kabuki drama—they are always on the side of *ninjo*. They are human weakness incarnate, with all its captivating charm as well as its disorderliness. The Kappa world is a Japan-through-the-looking-glass, a counter-Japan where there is an ongoing life that proceeds in accordance with its own inverse laws and relations. One might sigh after it, but one is held off by obligation, duty, propriety, convention, "face."

In real life, for example, women must not be forward; they must be shy, modest, quiet, unobtrusive, innocent, chaste. But Shimizu's she-Kappa is bold and aggressive. And yet she does not lose her womanliness. On the contrary, she is free to act as women really want to act: she can be as seductive, wanton, and ribald as she likes. She need not restrain her impulses, like a proper Japanese woman. When she wants to shout, she shouts; when she is happy she laughs, screams, giggles; when she likes a man, she throws herself at him (sometimes knocking him over in the process).

The he-Kappa are a bit on the silly side. They are always being chivvied, chased, or deceived by their women. Fortunately, they are not, like ordinary Japanese males, afraid to lose their dignity. They weep freely and lose "face" without hesitation.

This spontaneity allows a very broad satire on stuffiness and pretension in Japanese life. Politics, sex, class, marriage, Zen Buddhism all come in for their share. Take for instance Shimizu's great invention, a machine to make you feel like a Cabinet Minister. For ten minutes—at a small fee—you can mount a podium, speak into a battery of microphones, make a stately exit, sit in a "smokey back-

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room"—and get punched in the eye by your constituents. ("And yet they come back," says the *Kappa*, wonderingly, as he nurses his bruises.) All of this adds up to a good sign. It means, for one thing, that the grimness of the "post-war" is at an end; Japan has stepped on to a new stage. There is once again room for a little fantasy in life, and people can afford to indulge in these daydreams, to wonder what it would be like to be free as a Kappa. It also means that now people can stand off a little and look at themselves and their society objectively.

Heroes

HAVE just finished reading a new Chinese novel, Liu Pai-yu's *Flames Ahead*, which is about an incident in the crossing of the Yangtse by the Chinese Communist Army. It is hard to judge, because from a non-Communist author, it would be completely unacceptable. It is flat and one-dimensional; the heroes are too heroic, the enemies (who never appear clearly) too depraved; there are no shadows, no ambiguities. There is a whooping lust of battle, and a joy in the destruction of the "enemy" that would make us squirm with embarrassment in a Western novel.

And yet it is impressive, precisely because of this single-mindedness. The universe is divided into clear blacks and whites: the people versus the oppressors, the exploited peasants versus the brutal landlords, the Red Army versus the reactionaries, good versus evil. We like to think we are beyond these simple dichotomies,—but if we were honest we would have to admit that they attract us. This is one reason we look back to the past, the golden age when heroes were bold and pure in heart, when love and hate were simple, when emotions and ideals were not embarrassing. A world of simple equivalences: one hated evil, and what one hated was evil. Therefore one could kill without hesitation, because what one killed deserved to die—like a dog, or like an enemy, or like an infidel, or like an enemy of the faith, or like a counter-revolutionary landlord. To hate so completely and without complication demands a self-assurance that we have been losing, and it both attracts and repels us in the Communists. We are apologetic about heroism, embarrassed about ideals. The proper attitude is to be sceptical about the ideals in whose name we fight. We have no epic heroes; we have uncertain people who perform brave acts in spite of their inner doubts.

"What a beautiful world it must have been," thought Michele in Alberto Moravia's novel, *The Time for Indifference*,

> when a wronged husband could cry to his faithless wife: "Wicked woman! With your life you shall pay the penalty of your guilt!"—and, even better, not merely think such a thing but then hurl himself into action and kill them all—wife and lover and relations and the whole pack of them, and suffer neither punishment nor remorse; when thought was followed by action. "I hate you!"—and pht! a stab with a dagger, and there was your enemy or your friend lying on the floor in a pool of blood—when people didn't think so much, and the first impulse was always a good one; when life was not ridiculous, as it is now, but tragic, and death was death indeed, and people killed and hated and loved seriously, and shed real tears for real woes, and all men were made of real flesh and blood and rooted in reality as trees are in the earth. . . . He wished he could have lived in that tragic, honest age, have felt those vast, overwhelming hatreds, risen to those unlimited heights of feeling. But here he was on the earth, in his own time and his own life.

A world of heroism and tragedy, where thought is followed by action, where everything is simple, direct, and primitive, where right, justice, desire, impulse all flow together in a single current. Liu's novel tempts us to feel that the "New China" is such a world. Our rationalist upbringing makes us ashamed to admit the attraction of this fanatic strength. We believe in tolerance, but secretly we equate "intolerance" with "strong feeling" and "tolerance" with "indifference." In the face of absolute faith and certainty, our half-certainties, our self-doubts, our qualified articles of faith ache and burn. When the man of faith attacks us, we look not to our armour, but within ourselves. Do we not perhaps deserve to be attacked? He looks so sure of himself, his eye is so filled with the exultation of faith, he is so strong—maybe he is right. And when our reluctant warriors in tarnished armour finally do mount their creaking steeds to return the battle, it is never with that undivided mind, that passionate certainty that whatever they do is right—must be right, because it is they who are doing it.

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In Liu's world there is this quality of coherence between private feelings and public duty. The characters in the novel all have just exactly the motives that they are supposed to have. And the motives they are supposed to have are defined by their "class character." Landlords are arrogant or ingratiating. ("A fat bloated figure of a man, he stood with his cap clutched against his chest, making short jerky bows and mumbling, 'Please be lenient, please be lenient!' Yung stared at him coldly.") Peasants are straightforward and they somehow instinctively understand their historical obligations to the Revolution. Communists are sternly heroic, and political commissars are eternally vigilant.

There are no personal motives, or else the personal motives are completely fused with the purposes of the Party. Nobody fights because he likes to fight, or because he has to, or because he wants to be a hero, or because he does not want to be a coward. Even the private conversations of ordinary soldiers express only the "correct" thoughts. Women are not so much sweethearts, or wives, or mothers, as victims of exploitation, Spartan mothers of heroes, fighters for freedom. When Liang Pin visits his home village, which is on the line of march of the Liberation Army, after a twenty years' absence,

> They [relatives and neighbours] spoke of their life during the past ten years or so, they talked of Chairman Mao and Commander-in-Chief Chu Teh. Liang Pin spoke mostly of the discipline and policy of the People's Liberation Army.

A hero's homecoming. In Western armies, soldiers look forward impatiently to furlough —remember the American GI's "Rotation Blues" of the Korean War?—but the Soldiers of the Faith want their leave cancelled so that they can "get in there and fight."

And with this faith that one is fighting for the Right, one does not have to make personal moral decisions. The Party, which is the embodiment of Right, decides; one can act—even if action means hating and killing —without qualification or reserve. This attitude opens all stops in the rhetoric of violence. "Consumed with fury," "kill the sons of bitches," "hit them, smash them, wipe [them] out," "squash the bastards," "campaign of annihilation." In a non-Communist novel this would be embarrassing, in bad taste, hate-mongering, militaristic. But not for the hosts of Righteousness.

The gusto with which they smite the enemy, hip and thigh, is truly Biblical, and reveals the religious quality of this exultant fanaticism. Joyousness in the battle is almost mandatory because after all you are killing enemies, reactionaries, bastards, landlords, and agents of landlords, not fellow human beings. It was a naïve world that was outraged by Count Ciano's enjoyment of the sound of bombs falling on Ethiopians. What was wrong was not the enjoyment itself, but that it was Ciano who was doing the enjoying. If you are on the right side, if you are the pure in heart—washed in the blood of the lamb, the élite, the elect, the instrument of God or of History, or whatever you want to call it—then it is natural, not monstrous, for you to enjoy it. The doctrine seems to be that an act is not in and of itself either good or evil; it depends on who commits it.

In a round-table discussion among Japanese scientists recently, someone asked a scientist who had been on an official mission to Communist China:

> "Tell me frankly. Is it true that the Communists have executed hundreds of thousands of people?" "Yes," came the answer. "They themselves admit several million 'liquidations,' so I suppose the real figure must be even higher. But, of course, they were all landlords."

And with this statement, the questioner's doubts seem to have been put to rest.

Herbert Passin

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Letter from MONTE CARLO

The Age of Respectability

OUR age may be the "age of longing," or the "age of anxiety" or the "age of suspicion," but, I am sorry to say, it is also the age of respectability. When I was born, poets and other Bohemians had long hair, dirty shirts, and shady morals—it was, nevertheless, the dream of every insurance broker to look like a poet. Today every Bohemian is at pains to look like an insurance broker. In my early youth, every bank clerk had a secret collection of his own verse written about his own soul; today every Bohemian has a secret bank balance, not even printed in red. Intellectuals no longer wear filthy Russian pullovers; on the contrary, Communist statesmen are clad in Savile Row suits. People on the whole have ceased to believe in anything in particular and yet they manage to give the impression of experiencing a religious revival.

The ill wind of this most regrettable respectability has blown across the State of Monaco, too. Official Monaco is ashamed of gambling. *O tempora, o mores!* It is as if South Africa were ashamed of gold, Saudi Arabia of oil. Official Monégasque propaganda leaflets and booklets give you information galore on the Oceanographic Museum and the Jardin Exotique, as though Monte Carlo owed her fame exclusively to these two venerable institutions. The Monte Carlo Rally is also mentioned and the House of Grimaldi—complete with its latest acquisition, Her Serene Highness—is also regarded as an asset. But the Casino? . . . Oh yes. . . .

I have a book in front of me—an official publication—called *"Les Trois Villes de Monaco,"* containing 290 pages, a little less than three of which deal with the Casino. We are told of its façade and architectural style and the Ionic columns adorning it, its theatre, its once famous Ballets Russes, and of a number of illustrious musicians who have appeared there. During our tour, at a certain point the author tells us: "*Sur la gauche*" (I thought it was *à gauche*), "*les salles de jeux. . . .*" That is all. It is not revealed what people do in those *salles de jeux* and the word *roulette* is not once mentioned anywhere throughout those 290 pages. Various state officials have gone to great trouble to emphasise how untrue it is that the state lives on the Casino. The Casino, they remind us, is a private limited company which gives a small percentage of its income to the state. Monaco's ordinary budget for the year 1955 showed a total income of about £2,500,000 to which the Casino's contribution was about £136,000. This sum, it was pointed out to me repeatedly, was very small even for Monaco. I pressed my various informants hard but managed to obtain two admissions only. One high-ranking official agreed that it was the Casino that had made Monaco what it was but—he hastened to add—"that is past history." Another gentleman maintained stubbornly that Monaco's main income was derived from postage stamps and the tourist trade but in the end he conceded that gambling "might" be responsible for attracting "a certain number" of tourists. "Would you say more people are attracted by the Casino than by the Jardin Exotique?" I asked. There was no reply.

Not so very long ago Monaco regarded herself as the jewel of the Riviera, was proud of her gaiety and lightheartedness and the prodigal and dissipated Russian princes at her gambling tables. In the present Age of Respectability the Casino is spoken of as though it were an unimportant annexe of the Jardin Exotique. There is an official attitude which tends to treat tourists as though they were not gamblers but scientists, interested only in Oceanography. They still live on the

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earnings of the eldest sister—and live very well indeed—but the family has become so refined that they refuse to say what the eldest sister's profession really is.

All this is nonsense. The Casino remains the centre of the Monaco microcosm and within a few days of his arrival the visitor cannot help developing a roulette-centric *Weltanschauung*. Signposts all over Monaco point—symbolically as well as in fact—towards the Casino. On entering the building you find in the vestibule a number of slot-machines, the type into which you put a 20-franc piece and win—if you are lucky—1,000 francs or even less. "Slot-machines?" I said contemptuously to my wife on the first day. "Surely, if we're in Monte Carlo we want to play roulette, not the slot-machines." But in Monte Carlo there is no getting away from the slot-machines, or from gambling in any other possible form. I am no gambler myself, gambling does not interest me in the least. At card games, I am always inclined to let the other fellow win, he usually seems so keen on it. I have never bet on a horse (if we except one or two charity sweepstakes) and have never seen a horse-race or a dog-race in my life. Nevertheless, even I, a born anti-gambler, spent my days in Monte Carlo in a surprising manner. In the morning my wife and I had a coffee or an ice-cream in the Café de Paris where we played the slot-machines; in the afternoon we had another coffee or ice-cream and on that occasion we played *boule*. (This game is a silly and poor relation of roulette.) In the evening we went to the Casino. Passing through the vestibule we played the slot-machines, in the *salle privée* we played roulette, and on the way out we played the slot-machines again. On our way to the hotel we stopped at the Café de Paris, to have a drink and another go at *boule*. Then we went home.

I always carry three pens in my pocket with differently coloured inks: blue, red, and green. (I hardly ever use the red and the green ones but I carry them faithfully.) Before going to bed in Monte Carlo, I laid my three pens on the table, unscrewed their tops and covered the six objects—three pens and three tops—with a scarf. Then my wife had to pick one top and one pen from underneath the scarf. If the pen and top did not match in colour, she lost her stake; if they did, I paid her treble. We played this fascinating game for an hour or so—but never too long. We did not wish to oversleep and be late for the slot-machines next day.

This, of course, was a craze. The germ is in the air in Monte Carlo: a passion for going to the Oceanographic Museum does not seize you there. One instinctively tries to avoid the scorn of hotel porters, pageboys, waiters, and barmen. You just do not relish the idea of their whispering behind your back: "Him? Oh, he's no good, he doesn't even gamble. . . ."

Our age is also the age of hypocrisy. It sanctimoniously preaches all the old-fashioned moral and religious doctrines: while it does not dream of obeying them, it is too lazy to contradict or oppose them. This age does not even take its gambling seriously. Most people gamble because gambling is an old and respected habit, it is said to be fun, and in certain social circles one just does gamble every now and then. But where is the atmosphere of Dostoievskian tension? Where are the mad Russian princes or their present-day successors squandering away vast fortunes in a few hours? The people I saw shoot themselves in the elegant and beautiful park in front of the Casino were few and far between.

The Casino has also become less formal in the post-war years. One dresses as one likes and black ties are worn only by croupiers. There is a rough-and-tumble democracy around the gambling tables, you never know with whom you are rubbing shoulders. Shabby people play for millions and hand out £10 tips after each win; then again there are ladies overloaded with diamonds as big as hazelnuts who hardly exceed the 200-franc minimum and keep biting their lips in feverish excitement while the ball is turning. I saw a multi-millionaire industrialist playing with the caution of a very mean little boy playing marbles. "It's a pity," someone remarked, watching him, "that these big businessmen have to come here in person to play. I'm sure they'd prefer to send their private secretaries to win a few thousand pounds for them."

The new aristocracy—replacing the fabulously rich and madly extravagant Russian Grand Dukes, but not quite—are the Greeks. Many Greeks made vast fortunes out of ship-

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ping and in other ways after the war and, of course, the richest of them, M. Onassis, who practically owns the place, attracts his compatriots to Monte Carlo, too. The lower peerage is formed by the Italians. The English, needless to say, are just nowhere. The Americans do have money but have failed—up to now, to turn up in large numbers. The Rainier–Kelly marriage, in addition to being a "touching romance," "love at first sight" and all that sort of thing, was also aimed at rectifying the deficiency of American dollars in Monte Carlo. And then, of course, there is Sir Winston Churchill as an occasional attraction. One day I saw the old gentleman absorbed in a game of roulette, at the table where the minimum stake is 1,000 francs (the highest minimum of all), and he was winning large sums partly by placing odd chips here and there and partly by playing the number 17. There was a private detective standing behind him to prevent any member of the public from getting behind Sir Winston's chair; and also a valet who, with a red and blue pencil, jotted down the numbers as they came up. A lot of people—myself among them—stood opposite Sir Winston, gaping at him in admiration. He took no notice of us. Next to him sat his host—a literary agent—in white dinner-jacket, not gambling and fidgeting very self-consciously. It was obviously his finest hour. Every now and then he said something to Churchill in atrocious Hungarian English which I understood all right, but I doubt whether Sir Winston did.

THE gamblers in Monte Carlo are divided into three distinct groups. Those who come in the morning, those who come in the afternoon, and those who come in the evening.

The evening visitors form the most numerous and the most diverse group—from tourists of all sorts to rich habitués. Their way of playing varies. A large number of people — many women among them — just throw their money about, cover numbers and odd combinations of numbers with scores of chips, rush from one table to the other, play at several tables simultaneously, and, more often than not, forget what they have staked. One night I watched an elderly lady pocket a small fortune by claiming the unclaimed winnings of one of these scatterbrained punters. The elderly lady had, by the way, one of the few really safe systems. Other people keep trying out much less reliable ones. Many of them sit at the table with grave faces for long hours, making notes of all the numbers which come up and only placing their stakes after thorough deliberation based on complicated calculations. They like to lose their money in a scientific way instead of just frittering it away stupidly.

There is only one good system: to have constant luck. To have luck for one night is, however, one of the most dangerous things, the undoing of many a good man. (The Casino itself is always sure of winning. The laws of probability are absolutely valid in the long run. The Casino wins on zero and zero is sure to come up—I repeat, in the long run —once in every thirty-seven throws. So the Casino takes one thirty-seventh of the total stakes. This would be quite satisfactory in itself, but it is vastly increased by the sheer stupidity of many players.)

Players of the second type come in the afternoon—more often than not by coach. They come from French towns near and far and also from Italy, including many foreign holidaymakers from the Italian Riviera. They play in the kitchen (this is the name given to the uncarpeted ante-room of the *salle privée*) and individually they lose small sums. The sum total they leave behind, however, must be considerable. One day I counted thirty-two coaches arriving in ninety minutes. If we count thirty-two people per coach, that means about a thousand arrivals in an hour and a half. Assuming an average loss per head of £2 we may take it that they are collectively £2,000 the poorer. And they pour in, hour after hour, day after day, every afternoon—cheaply clad and clutching slender purses, all expecting the miracle to happen, all intent on collecting a vast fortune in no time. Some of them win money and a very few win handsomely; just enough to maintain the belief that it is possible to win. In front of the Casino there are no boards bearing the legend: NO COACHES. Far from it! Coaches are very welcome.

The third and most interesting group plays in the morning. Quite a lot of people queue up at 10 a.m. waiting for the Casino to open. They say it is lucky to stake on the first turn. These early visitors are the professionals, the people who live on gambling. Some time ago

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most of them lost a fortune, large or not so large, here; and now they live on gambling. It is quite possible, indeed easy, to live on gambling provided (a) one has a little capital and (b) one is content with small daily winnings. If you have £1,000 and are prepared to risk it, it is quite easy to make a daily £4 or £5 at the roulette table if—and that is a very important "if"—you are prudent, know the game, and absolutely refuse to be carried away by the gambling spirit while gambling.

The professionals are to be found in the kitchen between 10 and 11 a.m. They are serious, intent, mostly bespectacled men (with just a sprinkling of women) aged between fifty and seventy-five. Every other person among them wears the ribbon of the *Légion d'Honneur* and I'm certain they deserve it. They all place their stakes themselves (most people in the evening crowd depend on the croupiers) and they make notes all the time. They work with stakes of 200 francs, occasionally, however, risking as much as 5,000 or 10,000. There is no frivolity or lightheartedness in the air. Nor is there any sign of tension. It is obvious to the onlooker that this is no game; it is work. The tempo of the game is also much brisker than in the afternoon or evening. Sometimes a few odd tourists happen to turn up in the morning, chattering and giggling footling amateurs—completely unaware of what is going on around them. They interfere with the pace and dignity of the game—they look and sound like tipsy roisterers in a cathedral. The professionals do not seem to mind them too much; they throw a few contemptuous glances at them and get on with the game. ("After all," they concede, "the Casino lives off them, not off us. At least, we hope, not off us.") By eleven o'clock the professionals have gone. They have finished their day's work. Theirs is not a bad life at all.

CONSPICUOUS and ubiquitous in the gaming rooms are the croupiers. There are four of them at each table: one at the end of the table, one at each side next to the roulette, and finally the *chef*—a supervisor only—at the other end. The croupiers try both to rake in and pay out all cash with the same frigid impassivity—be it four shillings or £4,000—but they do not always succeed. People often give them tips (again ranging from four shillings to £10 or even more) and each gift is greeted by a chorus of "*Merci, pour les employés,*" partly as an expression of gratitude and partly as a signal to the croupier who actually got the money that his fellows have noticed the tip and expect him to put it in the communal slot.

There are two hundred and twenty-seven "*employés de jeux*" in the Casino, not counting another thirty who work for the baccarat tables. For some special reason—which must be plain to the initiated but quite incomprehensible to me—baccarat works under a separate régime and the croupiers there are not called "*employés de jeux*" but "*maîtres de table.*" In addition to the croupiers the Casino employs a large office staff, porters, cloakroom attendants, cashiers who sell and buy chips, charwomen, waiters, carpenters, bricklayers, locksmiths, plumbers, etc. The total number of its employees is about nine hundred, not counting the many hundreds who do not work in the Casino itself but are employed by the Casino in luxury hotels, night clubs, and cafés owned by the Casino.

If you want to become a croupier you have to spend two years' service in some menial employment, such as pageboy or lift-boy. Then you will be admitted to the school. For six months you will study languages and such subjects as *chemin de fer* and *trente et quarante* which strike some people as more interesting than comparative philology or mathematical logic. You would also have to study craps. Shooting craps is an American game admitted to the Casino of Monte Carlo only a few years ago. You can see young Americans throwing a couple of dice with growing energy and fury near the entrance of the *salle privée* but—Heaven forbid!—not in the *salle privée* itself. European visitors throw suspicious and contemptuous glances at the agitated players and croupiers look down in embarrassment when the word "craps" is uttered. The present low prestige of the game may, however, eventually be changed by the Rainier–Kelly marriage.

Each table opens play with a certain amount of chips, the value of £3,000 being the minimum. It is impossible to "break the bank"—i.e. make a table bankrupt. If money is needed, the *chef* sends for more. Whatever happens, the bank pays in full and play goes on. The Casino, by the way, manufactures

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its own roulettes and rakes and other paraphernalia, with the exception of the chips. These are manufactured by a French firm which also prints bank-notes for some minor foreign governments. All chips bear a secret and invisible marking and as soon as one single counterfeit chip is discovered the entire current issue of chips is withdrawn and replaced. The last attempt at falsifying chips occurred in 1935—and a feeble attempt it was. The lowest value chip is the 100-franc one (although the smallest stake in the Casino is 200 francs, about four shillings) and the highest—nicknamed "rock"—is worth a million francs or £1,000.

The Casino also has its own electric power station independent of, and in addition to, the public supply. The idea is, of course, that total darkness falling on the gaming rooms in the event of a short-circuit would mean a Heaven-sent opportunity for some kinds of people.

A croupier's job is a good one. Most of them own a house and a car and seem to have plenty of money. Retiring croupiers get a pension. The main snag in their job is that the vast sums they receive as tips are collected and distributed according to a complicated system between too many recipients—so that a 1,000-franc tip at any one table means only about thirty to an individual croupier. Valets, on the other hand—those magnificently attired individuals who walk about emptying ashtrays, finding seats for people, lighting cigarettes, and handing out score cards—may keep all the tips they receive. This is why a gentleman I heard of had himself demoted from superintendent to valet. He earned much more in his new job.

"Your friend," I said to the man who told me about him, "was not a snob."

He shook his head.

"Oh, yes, he was. He said that he had been a colonel in the Yugoslav Army and it was all the same to him whether he sank to the rank of superientendent or valet."

"At least," I replied, "he was a man without ambition."

"Wrong again," said my man. "He had a great ambition. He wanted to become a lavatory-attendant and make *real* money."

MONACO'S entire territory covers an area of 360 acres. She is, by a long chalk, the smallest country in the world. A motor car—if the road is clear—can traverse the whole country in less than two minutes, while a jet plane can cross it at the narrowest point in less than five seconds; at her greatest width it would take the jet about ten seconds. Monaco is also unique in that there is no proper countryside in the whole country—her whole territory is built up of the so-called three cities—Monaco, Monte Carlo, and La Condamine—which are, in fact, one small city. The state has 20,192 inhabitants but only about 3,000 citizens. Altogether 1,170 male voters elect a Parliament of eighteen men (women have no franchise, except in municipal elections). The executive power is in the hands of the prince who exercises it through his single minister and three councillors appointed by him. These four people must not be elected members of Parliament; if they are, they have to resign before taking up government office.

There are no political parties in Monaco in the accepted sense of the word. Political life, luckily, does not reflect the spectre of France. Parties—such as they are—are haphazard groupings formed before elections with limited and temporary programmes and are, as a rule, dissolved soon after the elections. In Monaco all 1,170 voters are personally acquainted with fifty or so candidates and they vote for personalities rather than for political parties. The existence of a Communist Party is officially denied but several people informed me in whispers that there is a Communist Party in Monaco, numbering twelve members. The greatest political problem, however, is not Communism but constitutional reform. The prince has still much too wide personal powers which — many people feel—will have to be circumscribed. I visited Government Building in which a good-sized room is used as the debating chamber of Parliament. Monaco is the first state, to my knowledge, which uses a tape-recorder for perpetuating parliamentary debates. This is not so much to satisfy the supposed curiosity of an eager posterity as to avoid unnecessary argument at present. Too often, deputies, reading sloppy sentences and shabby ideas attributed to them by the Monaco equivalent of Hansard, have complained, "I never said such a thing." Now, in case of doubt or protest, the deputies concerned are confronted with the merciless tape-recorder.

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Is there such a thing as a special Monégasque mentality? I think there is. There is nothing heroic about it: it is a refreshingly common-sense way of looking at things. Many people nowadays tend to forget that there is nothing sacred or even especially lovable about the State. A state should be a gigantic limited company formed to protect the interests of the inhabitants of its territory. It is a painful and paradoxical development that today it is we who serve the state and not vice versa. It is, alas, only the little state of Monaco which comes close to our ideal of something like a limited company paying dividend to the shareholders, called citizens.

The Monégasque people do not aspire to acquiring colonies nor do they cherish any imperialistic designs on the Alpes Maritimes province of France that surrounds them. They don't want glory; they want cash. They want tourists. They want tips. And they are wise, prosperous, and reasonably happy. They do not pay any direct taxes, they are exempt from compulsory military service of all kinds, and they are prohibited from gambling in the Casino. They prosper on the folly of others and that I am sure makes life even sweeter and the sunshine brighter.

Yet, one may ask, there must surely be a few among them who would prefer, say, a military career to the life of a hotel manager or a waiter or a croupier. But there are not; not even a few; not even one—only a half. The Monégasque army of volunteers—the Carabinières—consists of about eighty men. There is not one single Monégasque citizen among them. There is, to be precise, one officer who has dual nationality—he is half French, half Monégasque. That makes half a Monégasque in the national army. Yes, they are indeed a wise people.

Prince Rainier's marriage to Her Serene Highness Princess Grace created wide interest, indeed intense excitement, all over the world with the single exception of Monaco herself. The Monégasque—as I remarked before—are sober and industrious people, full of common sense. They expect their prince to do his duty, serve the interests of the country, and further the tourist trade. The Monégasque nation nodded its approval of the Kelly affair. The marriage of the prince to a beautiful Hollywood film-star who, as a sideline, was the daughter of a millionaire real-estate man, seemed a good idea. But they did not cheer themselves hoarse in wild enthusiasm at the wedding; and the bridal couple's return from their honeymoon—when there were no foreign journalists present in the capital—passed practically unnoticed.

Rainier III may appoint his own heir to the throne—not necessarily his own child but any male member of his family. Should he die, however, before an heir is appointed—a horrid thought, and his subjects are uneasy about his deep-sea diving experiments—Monaco, as a state, will cease to exist and will become, according to treaty, part of France. Should the young prince die before Princess Grace produces what the Almanac of Gotha calls, somewhat flippantly, an issue, the Monégasque will become French, will be called up for service in the French Army, and will have to pay income tax. It would be extremely bad luck. It would mean a whole country lost on a gamble—a sad if not altogether inappropriate ending to a charming and delightful operetta.

George Mikes

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At the Tate Gallery

IT IS, of course, pathetic that the Tate Gallery should have to publish a begging letter asking the general public to subscribe £5,000 for the purchase of two Matisse reliefs to complete a set of four, the Gallery itself having been able to afford to buy only two. One has to deplore not only the moral implications of the State's meanness in regard to the arts but the lack of business acumen this shows. The State wants to attract tourists, yet won't put itself out to help to make our museums attractive to tourists. It wants to gain prestige in matters of the spirit, yet does so much less than might be done to promote and assist artistic creation, a notorious source of prestige. Still, it must be remembered that the State is equally reluctant to subsidise other activities which can help to earn dollars or national prestige—motor racing, for example, or participation in the Olympic Games.

And perhaps it is wrong to take it for granted that the State should do more than it does for the arts; perhaps it would be more just to resent how little is done by private enterprise, both big business concerns and rich individuals, who, after all, may have attenuated incomes nowadays, but are still not so very short of capital: indeed, if all those people who have large sums of capital invested in works of art were to calculate the capital appreciation on their collections over the last seven years, then to set aside a sum of money equal to, say, a fifth of that amount and donate it to museums, in instalments, by deed of covenant, over the next seven years, then start again—if this were done, our museums would be rich.

But people in this country are less ready than they are in America to put something back into art in return for what they take out of it, doubtless because art has not the snob-value here that it has over there. So the Tate has to make an appeal through the correspondence columns of *The Times* and even to place a collecting-box in its sculpture gallery.

Yet I am not sure that this is such a bad thing. We get our art cheaper than any of our other forms of entertainment: indeed, it is absurd that, at a time when our museums are crying out for money, we should still, as in the early days of popular education, be getting into them free, every day of the week. So that if we put a shilling into the Matisse box each time we go to the Tate we are no worse off than if we had paid the gate-money at the Musée d'Art Moderne. This would be a pointless gesture if it were merely a pious offering. The point is that it is something more. Normally the purchasing policies of national collections are for ever cheating our hopes and realising our fears: we are at the mercy of trustees who spend our taxes without consulting our tastes and in whose appointment we have no say; at best we may subscribe to the Contemporary Art Society or the National Art Collections Fund and have a voice in electing a committee whose decisions are still certain to frustrate us. But when a public appeal is made, we have a precious opportunity to exert some small shred of influence.

As to the Matisse appeal, it is surely a very worthy cause. All four reliefs are on view at present, and it is as a sequence that these four versions of the back of a female figure, their execution spreading across twenty-five years of Matisse's career, give us a clear insight into Matisse's creative process and an understanding of the extraordinary richness and complexity of his art. We observe, for example, that in the first two states the upraised left arm has a dramatic significance, stands for a conventional pathetic gesture, because the head is inclined towards it, but that in the last two states this overtly dramatic pose disappears as the head comes to be held perfectly upright. We observe that in the first state the forms are naturalistic, the volumes are muscles, that in the second state there is little left of the descriptive, though the volumes are still full and round, that in the third state the figure becomes a craggy rock-face, with its flattening of the forms and, here and there, the substitution of facets for a curving

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surface, that in the last state the forms arrive at their maximum simplicity and serenity. What is astonishing about this last state is that it is somehow the most "realistic" as well as the most "abstract" of the four with its intuition of female softness and female vitality manifest in every modulation of a form which might at first sight seem more architectural than human, and naked, and vulnerable.

The sequence as a whole resembles those sequences of photographs which Matisse sometimes made of several states in the painting of a picture. Here, however, in the versions of the *Nu de dos*, the stages in the progress have for once been preserved. And if it is the final state that will always hold our attention longest, the other three are there to reveal to us how Matisse's genius made its searching, exacting, disciplined, daring, and superbly empirical journeys of discovery.

THE way in which the reliefs are presented at the Tate is admirable so far as their placing and spacing are concerned. The one shortcoming is that the forms become broken up by the excessive accent given to the more or less horizontal planes by the lighting of the Tate's sculpture galleries—a top light coming through a roof high above. The proportions of these galleries, in fact, resemble those of a well. And, indeed, sculptures drown in them—without needing water, only too much air.

The present arrangement of these galleries has, at any rate, made the best, or something like the best, of a bad job—especially in the near gallery, where the Rodins and Renoirs, and the Matisse reliefs, are shown. The bigger works look very fine, though I think that some of the smaller Rodins give the impression that they have been added as afterthoughts. The far gallery has clearly presented more of a problem, for here the sculptures are far more diverse, both in style and scale. What is felicitous here is the way in which paintings have been used to fill in the vast dreary areas of wall without clashing with the sculptures. But I am not sure that it is the right thing to do to range all the sculptures along the sides of the gallery, leaving the middle of the floor empty. This classic arrangement works well in the near gallery, with its perspective of upright life-size figures. But in the far gallery I should have thought a less symmetrical arrangement desirable.

Some of the sculpture-stands in the Tate could be, I think, improved upon. Surely those which support the Renoir *Venus Victrix*, the Marini *Cavaliere*, the Germaine Richier figure called *Water*, and the Giacometti *Pointing Man* are too high, in the last case by a couple of feet?—the Giacometti has to be placed on or hardly above the ground if it's to make any sort of sense.

The stand for the Henry Moore *Recumbent Figure* also seems unsuitable, in that it diverts attention away from the sculpture. This stand is in the same material as the figure, hornton stone. But whereas the figure is severely weather-beaten through sustained exposure to the climate of New York, the stand has never been out of doors, so that its rich greens and browns make the sculpture look the shadow of itself. Furthermore, the stand is composed of separate bricks, the pattern of lines between which creates a further distraction. I would suggest that the bricks should be cemented to form a solid block and that the surface should be treated so as to tone down its colour. Alternatively, a simple wooden stand would be an improvement.

I think, too, that more discretion might be used in the placing of sculptures in the picture galleries, most particularly in relation to the Seurat *Baignade*, perhaps the most important single work in the Tate. For some time this has been hung in a small gallery at the far end of a long one, so that it is visible through a doorway as one traverses the long gallery. A serene and noble vista. Only, the Tate staff seem to loathe it. First they put three sculptures down the middle of the long gallery, hopelessly obscuring the view. Then these were removed, and the view was left uninterrupted for some months. Then a bench and a couple of chairs were placed in front of the Seurat, and the vista was destroyed by seated visitors taking a nap or reading newspapers. Now a sculpture has appeared again—a Marini horse on its hind legs, trying expressionistically to throw its rider. I suppose the excuse is shortage of space.

This, no doubt, would also be the excuse for some odd quirks of hanging. Giacometti, for one, has been rather manhandled. The Tate happens to possess two paintings by this artist of a quite exceptional subtlety. So for a long time they hung them on either side of a big and particularly brash caricature by Buffet, topped off with a large Corbusier. These have now been removed. The Buffet's place has been given to a large de Chirico of poor vintage, and the height of the Giacomettis has been raised, so that they can't be seen properly, to make room for a Morandi and a Sironi underneath.

Doubling-up of this kind could be avoided by the introduction of screens jutting out from the walls of the long galleries, such as are used in the contemporary British room. Screens, moreover, would break up the walls and so perhaps encourage more coherent hanging than is generally to be found in the Tate's modern foreign rooms. Would it really be so difficult to do as other museums and hang all the works by a

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given artist together? Isn't this more important than symmetry?

As a matter of fact, there is no great encouragement to believe that more screens would lead to more coherent hanging, because the principal modern British room is the most confused gallery of them all. One section is given over to the Euston Road and allied painters, and, quite apart from any art-historical considerations, this is the only section which it is tolerable to look at as a whole. The rest of the room is a chaos in which some of the arrangement seems based on art-historical reasoning, some on decorative reasoning, and some on no reasoning at all. The latest aberration—at the time of writing—obviously has a reason, shortage of space, but it is still unforgivable: this is the placing of Bacon's *Figure in a landscape*, with its delicate tonalities and its reliance upon the subtlest nuances of brushwork, high up on the wall, as if it were a forthright decorative composition. It is unforgivable because nearby wall-space in prominent positions has been found, permanently it would seem, for immature works by young painters which should not really be on the Tate's walls at all.

CERTAINLY the Tate should buy works by young artists. Apart from helping the artist, it is a worthwhile speculation, which may save a great deal of money later on, when the artist's prices rise. But, having done so, the Gallery should exhibit such works as new acquisitions for a few months and then put them away in the cellars. Later, when the artist has proved himself and maturer works have been acquired, the early works can be got out and hung beside them. As things are, the exhibiting of an early work may be an embarrassment to the artist. For the Tate tends to buy a very immature work by an artist and, feeling that they have done their duty by him, nothing more for several years. Meanwhile, the artist is represented by a work of a quality he has long surpassed, hanging there unsupported by any later example which would put it into perspective.

Much could be said in criticism of what the Tate has bought, and when, and for how much. But there is no point in saying it, because mistake after mistake is bound to be made so long as buying is done by a Board of Trustees. To know the facts behind the Gallery's lack of a work by de Stäel is to know that Messrs. Douglas Cooper and Graham Sutherland are grotesquely wrong in blaming Sir John Rothenstein. The fault lies entirely with the practice of making a government-appointed committee responsible for buying works of art. In the face of this practice, particular criticisms are a waste of paper. The only constructive criticisms can be those which suggest how a museum staff might make the best of a bad job.

The Tate staff might, for one thing, get titles right. Why is Henry Moore's *Family Group* ungrammatically labelled *The Family Group*? Why is Moynihan's *Portrait Group*, as the artist called it, pedantically but incorrectly labelled *The Teaching Staff of the Royal College of Art* when, in fact, the group consists only of the staff of the College's Painting School? Why is Bacon's triptych called *Three studies for a larger composition*? I know the answer here. Originally it was known as *Three studies for figures at the base of a crucifixion*. This title was thought likely to give offence and another one found. Subsequently it was pointed out to the authorities that the new title was altogether misleading, because the artist had never intended to paint "a larger composition" (none of Bacon's "Studies" is ever a study in this sense). But a request, made on behalf of the artist, for the title to be changed to *Three studies from the human figure* was turned down.

ONE allowance that must be made for any defects in hanging on the modern side of the Tate is that the Gallery houses a great many temporary exhibitions, which means both loss of space that would otherwise be given over to the permanent collection, and the necessity, because these exhibitions vary in size, constantly to reshuffle what is shown of the permanent collection. We tend, of course, to complain that London has not got a gallery suitable for important loan exhibitions. Yet there is one compensatory advantage in the Tate's having to make room for these, which is that they provoke us to go there. It is not always easy to make the effort to visit a museum—I mean a museum in the town one is living in. Until one actually gets there, one tends to forget that it won't be a bore. So that if temporary exhibitions provide a bait, it is worth putting up with their consequences.

At the time of writing, two such exhibitions were on view: one, arranged by the Arts Council, was called "Autour du cubisme," the other, arranged by the Tate itself, "Wyndham Lewis and Vorticism"—an interesting juxtaposition, discouraging to chauvinism. It was a pity, nevertheless, that the cubist show was merely a selection of pictures from the Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris. The great weakness in the Arts Council's coverage of modern art has been a lack of exhibitions comprehensively representing the great movements—impressionism, cubism, surrealism, and the rest. There has been no shortage of good one-man shows in the Council's programme. But it is precisely the shows devoted to movements that are needed

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most urgently in a country whose public collections of modern art are as sketchy as ours. We have had, to be sure, several exhibitions on a national basis—German and American and Italian, among others, with one from Soviet Russia to come. But this is not enough. In the first place what is needed is the international exhibition, showing how surrealism, for example, or abstract art, developed simultaneously in different countries. In the second place, certain purely local movements—*Der Blaue Reiter*, for instance—deserve more than a section of a national exhibition. Indeed, the time is overdue for a series of exhibitions of movements in modern British art—Unit One, Euston Road, neo-romanticism, and so on. Here, perhaps, the task need not be undertaken by the Arts Council, if the Tate itself intends or can be persuaded to follow up its skilfully-arranged Vorticist exhibition.

What an instructive exhibition this was, what a saddening spectacle! There was such a sense of striving and straining to do what didn't come naturally, indeed, to do everything that ran counter to innate talents and tastes. It is a common enough phenomenon in English art, ancient and modern, this struggle between a geometrically-minded and doctrinaire super-ego and a sensitive, romantic, nature-loving id. But the self-denial can rarely have been so remorseless as the Vorticists had to make it. So strong, indeed, was the urge to deny instinct that it even took possession of Gaudier-Brzeska, just as if he had been born in England instead of France, and just as if his had not been the hand that modelled, only the previous year, the *Head of an Idiot*, a magnificent piece of Rodinesquerie, and therefore a vivid example of the very kind of art that Vorticism set out to blast. Gaudier remained, after his submission to the new school's disciplines, too much of an artist for his work to lose all character and distinction, but his Vorticist sculptures do have a laboured, *voulu* look about them which makes them seem much less authentic and alive than his pre-Vorticist work.

But if it is the case that Vorticism was not quite the natural bent of Gaudier or Jessie Dismorr or Frank Dobson or Nevinson or David Bomberg, what of Mr. Wyndham Lewis himself? Mr. Wyndham Lewis does tell us, in his introduction to the exhibition catalogue, that "Vorticism, in fact, was what I, personally, did, and said, at a certain period." Was he, then, as innately tough-minded, to use William James's terminology, as the Vorticist doctrine? Had he an id as austere and mechanically-minded as his super-ego? Or was he, too, underneath it all, a tender-minded nature-lover? Well, nobody could accuse Mr. Wyndham Lewis of being a nature-lover. Moreover, Mr. Wyndham Lewis's id does not appear to embarrass him with a soft underbelly: the armour-plating goes all round.

Yet, if we look again, we find that, though the armour goes all round, it isn't a perfect fit. The armour is all angles and straight lines, but underneath the straight lines there are curves, and the curves are those of the world of Augustus John. Mr. Wyndham Lewis's geometrical manikins are in fact jazzed-up versions of figures by John.

An alternative key to the essential romanticism of Mr. Wyndham Lewis could be found in one of his self-portraits in the exhibition—the portrait dated 1921 which belongs to Manchester. Haven't we seen this face and pose before somewhere? In a self-portrait of Gauguin? And once this recognition has occurred, something else becomes clear. I mean, the identity of those crowds of fugitives from science-fiction who populate his paintings of the thirties. They are, in fact, Tahitians in disguise—in disguise because of Mr. Wyndham Lewis's well-known dislike of all cults of primitivism and the noble savage. But they are still Tahitians: in his paintings—such, in spite of every calculation, is the power of the id—Mr. Wyndham Lewis has been unable to stop himself from letting Rousseau in through the back door of the space-ship.

The suggestion that Mr. Wyndham Lewis's art is less austere than it claims to be is not intended to imply that he is not a distinguished painter. The large Vorticist painting called *Revolution*, the tenderly-observed series of portraits of the artist's wife painted in 1937–38, the semi-abstract drawings, not unlike Sutherland "presences," of 1925–27—these are among the best things done by British painters in our time. They only seem devalued when we remember the tone in which Mr. Wyndham Lewis has written of the truly great painters of our time, when we consider the rôle of the "enemy" in which Mr. Wyndham Lewis has cast himself, and ask what he has offered as replacement for what he has shot down, or, anyway, shot at.

David Sylvester

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"Of Poor Bert Brecht" †

THE analysis of a poet's work is always a subjective matter, and one cannot therefore criticise Mr. Luthy for "leaving out" something in the same sense that one can criticise a cartographer for leaving out a mountain range. Yet I find it odd that Mr. Luthy appears to have paid no attention to what is, at first sight, a very obvious, and perhaps the most fundamental of Brecht's expressed feelings: his pity for men and women (*Mitleid*); his insistence that human beings need each other, and—though this is less obvious—that some are always prepared to help others.

This sentiment is at least as evident in the *Hauspostille* as death, decomposition, and the acceptance of the vegetable life. The wonderful *Balldee von der Freundlichkeit der Welt*, which Luthy quotes, surely brings it out much more than "the acceptance of existence ... with child-like piety and docility": you were born; nobody had any obligations towards you; you would have died if people had not, *out of friendliness*, helped you; and you don't require more to love the world than this token of humanity. This humanity is unconditional: everybody deserves pity.

Denn alle Kreatur braucht Hilf von allen.[1]

And everybody gets pity, at least from some: from Brecht, for instance. Pity brings the girl in the *Kaukasische Kreidekreis* into her troubles: did she *have* to pick up that baby and keep it? Pity almost wrecks the *Good Woman of Sezuan*. *Mother Courage* fights it with animal cunning, but it creeps in through her flesh and blood, her dumb daughter who saves the people of Halle and dies for it. Pity and humanity are passions as irresistible as the deadly sins: they wrecked the brave Cæsar (*Wie schrie der laut: "Auch du, mein Sohn"!*[2]) as sensuality wrecked Macheath (Salomon Song in *Dreigroschenoper*). And its terrible force comes from the fact that this is a terrible age when men are wolves to men:

Eine glatte Stirn
Deutet auf Unempfindlichkeit. Der Lachende
Hat die furchtbare Nachricht
Nur noch nicht empfangen.

. . . . . .

Man sagt mir: Iss und trink du! Sei froh, dass du hast!
Aber wie kann ich essen und trinken, wenn
Ich dem Hungernden entreisse, was ich esse, und
Mein Glas Wasser einem Verdurstenden fehlt?
Und doch esse und trinke ich.
(An die Nachgeborenen)[3]

But—and this is the second point—simple pity must be avoided, for it leads to disaster in a world whose problems cannot be solved by private goodwill. The only logical form of private behaviour is selfishness and rapacity:

Und wie man sich bettet, so liegt man
Es deckt einen keiner da zu.
Und wenn einer tritt, dann bin ich es
Und wird einer getreten, dann bist's du.
(Mahagonny)[4]

Macheath was all right "*solang er folgte der Vernunft/und raubte was zu rauben war.*"[5] On the other hand this logical behaviour leads men to become indistinguishable from criminals and exploiters: that is the dilemma of the *Good Woman of Sezuan*, powerfully presented in Shen Te's trial.

There is only one solution. Doubtless Brecht would call it dialectical: pity becomes effective only through pitilessness, humanity through inhumanity, i.e. through the disciplined action of the Communists. The point of the *Massnahme* is not that organisation is an end in itself but that the idealist does not solve the problem of the hungry coolies by his individual action; on the contrary, in jeopardising the success of the revolution—which can be won only by long struggle, by strategy and tactics, by cunning and deceit as well as heroism, he leaves them in their hunger. And just because the impulse of pity is so powerful, it must be resisted with the utmost rigour in order to be made effective in the end. Obviously this attitude is open to a number of objections. My point is not that it is right, but that it should not be misunderstood as some other attitude, for neither Brecht's artistic development nor his Communism can, I think, be understood without it.

I do not wish to comment on the rest of Mr. Luthy's article except to point out some errors (of translation and fact). The Prelude in Colchos to the Caucasian Chalk Circle (p. 34) should be

† *As this issue of Encounter goes to press we learn of the sudden death of Herr Bertolt Brecht in East Berlin of a heart attack.—Ed.*

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"Prelude in the (a) Kolkhoz." The translation of the Ballad of the Friendliness of the World, verse 3 line 3 and 4, should read: Many, children, were perhaps indifferent to you/But *many* (not: *a few*) were crying over you. The mistake is one of substance. The "Good Man of Szechuan" (p. 48) should be "The Good Human Being of Sezuan" (Brecht's spelling), for it was a woman. The description of Brecht's escape from Finland is incorrect, I think. I believe that Brecht left the country after the declaration of war against the U.S.S.R. This would have made it impossible to cross the 1,000 km. border into the Soviet Union, whether or not Brecht wanted to.

E. J. Hobsbawn

London, W.C.1

P.S.: If you want them, I provide translations of the quoted German passages:

(1) For every creature needs help from all.

(2) How did he cry out loud: "You, too, my son!"

(3) A smooth forehead
Points to insensitiveness. The man who laughs
Has merely not yet received
The terrible news.
.....
They tell me: eat and drink! Be glad that you have it!
But how can I eat and drink, when
I tear from the starving man, what I eat, and
My glass of water is missed by one who dies of thirst?
And still I eat and drink.

(4) And as we make our bed we must lie on it
Nobody tucks you in.
And if someone is to kick, let it be me
And if someone is to be kicked, let it be you.

(5) so long as he followed reason/and robbed what there was to rob.

[*Mr. Luthy replies:*

To take the last point first, I must plead innocent of any errors in the translation of Brecht's poetry, since these were supplied by the editors, as was indicated in a footnote. I would say, however, that to see a "mistake of substance" in the nuance of translation in verse 3 of the "Ballad of the Friendliness of the World" is certainly to regard Brecht's texts more scrupulously than does the poet himself. In the authorised East German edition of his poetry (*Hundert Gedichte*, 1951), Brecht has simply dropped this entire verse 3, and has so botched the most beautiful of his poems for rather questionable ideological reasons (east of the Elbe, apparently, one cannot say that "no one holds you if you wish to go"!).

Mr. Hobsbawn's interpretation of Brecht's escape from Finland to capitalistic Hollywood is contrary to the facts. Poetically (I spoke of the poem, not of the actual escape) Brecht's eyes were fixed on the little back-door of Petsamo to the free world; in reality, there was so little obstacle to his crossing the Russian frontier that he actually crossed it: and he did not escape dangerously on a tiny fishing-boat from Petsamo, but went by transit, his visas all in order, via Moscow–Vladivostok to California, where he arrived several months before the outbreak of the German–Russian war. The poem is clearly written shortly after his arrival in Finland from German-invaded Denmark, in early 1940, and is most probably post-dated in order to create precisely this confusion. (May I fix another point of history: contrary to a widespread opinion shared by Mr. Hobsbawn, Finland did not declare war on Russia in June, 1941, any more than in 1939; she was "preventively" attacked by Russia in both cases. As we are in the era of the liquidation of Stalin's myths, we might as well liquidate this one too.)

It is true that Brecht had excellent personal reasons for not lingering in the promised land of Communism. Some of his oldest friends, who had emigrated to Moscow, had fallen victims to the Great Purge. Among them was the actress, Carola Neher, who had shared with him in the triumph of the *Three-Penny Opera* and had been his great love; she was arrested in Moscow, handed over by Stalin's police to Hitler's police, and disappeared in a Nazi concentration camp. The fate of this woman, and of these friends, never seems to have troubled Brecht's sleep, nor his admiration of Russia, but it did make him prefer to celebrate the beauties of Soviet Communism from a healthy distance. All this is worth mentioning when one speaks of his "pity for men and women" as "the most fundamental of Brecht's expressed feelings." It is not usual to bring an author's personal morality into a literary discussion; but as Mr. Hobsbawn insists on it, let me assure him that he is certainly the first to discover such human feelings as outstanding traits of Brecht's character.

One can continue this discussion endlessly, putting quotation against quotation, each quotation needing its own commentary and raising its own questions. (E.g. the verse "For every creature needs help from all" is not from the "Ballad of the Friendliness of the World" but from the "Crime Story" series of poems in *Hauspostille*, which imitates sarcastically the sentimental style of the popular *Moritaten*.) The quotations from *Mahagonny* and the *Three-Penny Opera* — even apart from their outright banality—have nothing to do with pity or friendliness: if Macheath becomes the victim of his habits, returning in spite of all warnings

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to the bordello where the police arrest him, and if Brecht comments on this event with entirely satirical "moral" warnings against the weakness of the flesh and the danger of following one's sentimental inclinations, this is really good fun rather than the expression of any deep conflict of conscience.

Let me simply state that in Brecht's whole lyrical and expressionist period, up to the *Three-Penny Opera* and the first "didactic" plays, nobody ever helps anybody or is even supposed to. There is sadness and loneliness in Brecht's early work, and a rather low sort of sentimentality, but these ingredients of a "sad character" are by no means the same things as goodness and kindness of heart. Later, in the "Marxist" period of Brecht's work, human pity does creep in, but in a purely negative way: in the form of an unending polemic against the temptations of pity and goodness. Here I fully agree with Mr. Hobsbawn's interpretation, but I am unconvinced that this rejection of pity proves the existence of any "powerful impulse of pity" in Brecht. I do not believe that it is so difficult for a human being to resist the "natural" impulses of pity and kindness that we have to celebrate the hard-won victories of those who find ideological reasons for ruthlessness.]

Teddy-boy Criticism

In a review in your July issue, Hilary Corke gets off some hit-and-run abuse of Edgar Allan Poe and Mary McCarthy that I don't think should remain unanswered. Especially since, if I may be tactless for a moment, the tone of Mr. Corke's review—facile, free-wheeling, and snide—is one I've noticed cropping up in other younger British critics.

"I am afraid this struck me as a sordid and truthless book," he ends his notice of Miss McCarthy's *A Charmed Life*. And I am afraid his review struck me as malicious and irresponsible. Mr. Corke gives no reasons for the adjectives he (insincerely) fears he must use; they come as a Parthian shot, in the last sentence, without any argument leading up to them. However, I shall try to give some reasons for mine.

The malice I infer because of the otherwise inexplicable venom of the review. New Leeds, for example, as described in *A Charmed Life*, is not "a whimsy-whamsy New England 'artists' colony'" but a rather sinister place where people go to pieces. All Mr. Corke's feverish wisecracking about clowns fancying themselves Hamlets and hiccoughing sword-swallowers are beside the point, though not beside *his* point, which is to pretend that an oft-satirised subject has had a few more threads worn bare. That the *milieu* Wyndham Lewis attacked in *Tarr* is "a more demanding target" than New Leeds is true, but this is, unhappily, the way New Leeds (i.e. Wellfleet, Mass., where I've spent many summers) is. An author can't be blamed for an accurate rendering of her subject—especially since Miss McCarthy is not out for intellectual satire this time so much as for comedy and pathos, in both of which New Leeds-Wellfleet abounds.

As for irresponsibility: Mr. Corke remarks on "the difference between a bright student and a *really* 'first-rate mind'—of the sort that Poe hadn't got, and Miss McCarthy hasn't either." I'm not sure exactly what he means—would it be different if "*really*" (a) weren't italicised, or (b) weren't there at all? But the general intention is clear, and I wonder why he thinks so. Miss McCarthy, he admits, is "clever", but "only in the accusing sense—smart, glossy, barrenly intellectual." Myself, I think she is clever in the good sense—witty, polished, creatively intelligent; but my purpose is not to bandy adjectives with Mr. Corke or even to rebut his judgments, but to ask how he arrives at them. He mentions only two passages from the novel, the second of which illustrates a point that has nothing to do with truth, sordidness, or cleverness; nor does he otherwise, by analysis or exposition, go beyond his slurring adjectives. This I think irresponsible.

The same method is applied to Poe's literary criticism, which is described as "crude, gross, pompous, and inaccurate," adjectives which might better be applied to his own, ditto his reference to Poe's "ill-informed virulence." This teddy-boy writing, all display and toughness, both phoney, can't hide the fact that Mr. Corke doesn't know what he is talking about. He states that *The Shock of Recognition* contains "the whole of Poe's criticism" when in fact it has only half a dozen pieces out of several score. He cites only one example, Poe's demolition of the Boston-Brahmin poetaster, William Ellery Channing, about which he goes on for a column. Even if the article were as bad as he says it is, it would be irresponsible to damn a whole body of work on the strength of only one example. In fact, however, Poe on Channing is a little masterpiece of the same order as Mark Twain's "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses." Far from being "a meaningless high-pitched scream that sets the teeth on edge like something heard over an asylum wall" (your reviewer has a genius for inadvertent self-description), it is a witty, carefully reasoned deflation of false-poetic pretentiousness. What makes Poe's literary criticism remarkable, aside from the vigour of his mind, is that he gives in concrete detail,

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with copious examples from the text, the grounds for his judgments. He was an admirably *responsible* critic—indeed, it seems to be precisely his scrupulous insistence on going into detail that causes Mr. Corke, who certainly doesn't suffer from this noble defect, to despise him. As for "ill-informed virulence," it is true that Poe sometimes pretended to more learning than he had (but he *did* have a great deal, too); he went in for a certain amount of mystification and childish display and this was undoubtedly a sin, though personally I think it a venial one, and often amusing and stimulating; thus he very probably didn't go through any such pseudo-scientific process in writing *The Raven* as he claims he did, and yet his essay does illuminate the creative process. It is also true Poe was often virulent, but it was the passion of a powerful literary mind working in a provincial, smug culture in which the most appalling stuff was widely praised; when he was confronted with serious work such as that of Hawthorne, Dickens, or (even) Longfellow, Poe was generously appreciative.

Whether their minds are *really* first-rate or not, Poe and Miss McCarthy are alike in being clear, analytical, and thoughtful; in short, they are essentially critics. Is that perhaps why your reviewer, who is not a critic, substituting violence of expression for analysis and rhetoric for thought, detests them?

DWIGHT MACDONALD

[*Mr. Corke replies:*

I am grateful to Mr. Macdonald for his information about Wellfleet, Mass., which I have noted carefully.

But I must not be merely flippant about Mr. Macdonald, and I shall answer him more seriously and at length next month.]

Equality

MR. CROSLAND notices that "the best public schools offer . . . dependability of character." He goes on to describe a sense of injustice amongst those unable to sit down to this ethical feast. He seems thus to countenance the fallacy of salvation from without—one of the principal feeders to the primrose path. Anyone wishing to see the fallacy in, quite literally, the flesh, might (1) consider *Mrs. Warren's Profession*: in this play Shaw sustains magnificently the argument, both implicit and explicit, that as soon as young women have abundant opportunity to earn a good livelihood by good means, prostitution will vanish; and (2) walk down Bond Street of the Welfare State.

Speaking personally, in view of such actualities as nuclear fission, the tottering jive of world population and world food supply, and even this country's prospect in export markets, I am sure that I know of the historical archetype for even the most readable analyses of class warfare. It happened aboard the Titanic, where minds were exercised on the question how far second-class passengers should intrude upon decks reserved for the first, during the last few minutes that either class was above water.

W. L. RICKETTS

London, W.1

From The Lady Bellew

IF you have a lot of new subscribers, so much, I should think, the better, both for you and your new readers, but, are you not a little rude to us in your foreword to this month's issue when you suggest that this increase in your sales is at the expense of "glossy magazines" or because snobbery has been awakened by "*Noblesse Oblige*"?

Here is one who takes a book to the hairdresser to avoid having to read the women's periodicals (free) under the drier, and one who, knowing all about a previous generation of the Hon. Mrs. Rodd's family on both sides (Mitford and Bowles), came to the conclusion that "*Noblesse Oblige*" was composed with a tongue in her cheek. . . .

Let that be, I have found ENCOUNTER so far what I want. Stimulating. Somebody to agree with or argue with for a series of months. Unless got hold of by some vested interest, you will improve.

The theme "Equality," if everyone is as candid as Mr. Crosland, should clear the social air. The essence of the only achievable equality must surely be (making a start with English-speaking people and not muddling our minds with languages we cannot understand) firstly, to make use of the *qualities of mind* which are inherent in *all* (Indian, African, or what you will) who have imbibed them from the long polyglot tradition that has grown up slowly in these vigorous islands. Secondly, at whatever cost, to use up a *whole generation* to qualify as school teachers. That is, not teachers of one-track specialism, but teachers with only the vaguest boundaries between each other's "subjects." Thirdly, it will not take long before the children outstrip their teachers (delinquency is a sign of impatience). Equality can only exist in the mind (spirit), no material gains can satisfy the mind. That two men can talk to each other, and know perfectly well what the other is talking *about*, is the beginning and end of equality. Such a big beginning and such an objective (end) in view.

B. BELLEW

London, S.W.7

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A Philosophy for Little England?

IN HIS rejoinder (August 1956) to my review of *Philosophy, Politics, and Society*, Mr. Peter Laslett asks: "What makes you expect that there will always be an answer of a special sort, a philosophical answer to the questions [i.e. about Natural Rights, Justice, and the Good Society] which you find important?" He clearly intended the query to be rhetorical. But, oddly enough, I do not find it rhetorical at all, and will venture what seems to me a perfectly adequate reply: we have every right to expect philosophical answers to questions that are important to us because that is why—and that is *only* why—philosophy exists. It is precisely because these questions were asked that philosophy was born; and it is because these questions are important enough to be repeated again and again, in each generation, that philosophy survives. To the tidy-minded, his irrepressible curiosity is a nuisance; on which I can only comment that I hope the tidy-minded shall not inherit the earth. Of course, philosophy has not been able to answer these questions in the same way that science answers *its* questions; but that is not mysterious or even depressing: philosophy is not science, and philosophical questions cannot possibly have scientific answers.

I am sure that Mr. Laslett and his colleagues will agree that philosophy is not science, and even that linguistic philosophy has no more scientific sanction than any other philosophy—than pragmatism, neo-Kantianism, logical positivism, neo-Hegelianism, neo-Thomism. Its method is no more scientific than the methods of these other philosophies, and it does not discover truths which these philosophies fail to see. Philosophy in general does not discover truths; it is, etymologically, the love of truth not the search for truths. For instance, while the job of the physical scientist is to discover truths, that of the philosopher of science is to wonder about, and meditate on, the procedure by which these truths were discovered, their possible connection with other truths, etc., his aim being to satisfy our ineradicable curiosity about "the kind of world we live in." Exactly because philosophy—even the philosophy of science—is not science, its answers to its own questions are not demonstrable and intellectually coercive; which is why the world is populated by so many philosophies instead of by a single one.

I should say that the relation between the moral-political philosopher and the ordinary man is analogous to that of the philosopher of science to the scientist. Of course, our scientific activity differs in many ways from our moral and political activity. But they are both fundamental human activities; they both exist; and they do not have to justify their existence before the tribunal of philosophy. It is *not* the job of the philosopher of science to tell the scientist what questions he ought to ask—such questions grow out of the experience of science itself. Similarly, the problems of morals and politics are those which we experience in our moral and political activities; if we say that *these* are the problems, then that is all there is to it—no philosopher has the right to question their "reality." Admittedly, the language in which we discuss these problems and beliefs is often ambiguous and imprecise—but so is the physicist's language: in both cases, it is the philosopher's task to inform us as best he can about the nature of these ambiguities and imprecisions. What he cannot do is to return with a verdict that we are being upset by nothing. For us, the problems of Natural Rights and of Justice represent the final term of a whole series of existential questions: When is a citizen justified in defying the laws of his own community? Can a preventive war be just? Is it possible to say flatly that slavery ought not to exist? The problems that such questions flow from indisputably do exist, because we experience them.

NOW, I would not like to appear to be scattering seeds of dissension, but there is clearly a serious contradiction between the import of Mr. Laslett's rejoinder to my review, and the import of the book he edited. His rejoinder admitted the reality of the problems, while denying the possibility of ever throwing light on them—he has come forward as a sceptic in political philosophy. This is, however, one school of thought *within* political philosophy, an old and honourable school that counts among its members such distinguished political philosophers as Machiavelli and, in a qualified way, Hume. The statement that there are no answers to the questions of political philosophy is itself

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a kind of answer, and one rich in implications.

In contrast, the majority of the contributors to *Philosophy, Politics, and Society* did not say there were no answers, but seemed to be saying that there were no questions, only "pseudo-questions." This is quite a different matter, and the longer one contemplates it the more astonished one becomes. It is one thing to want, as Mr. Laslett does, to abolish political philosophers—that has been thought of before. But to want to abolish the questions that we, in our moral and political dilemmas, ask ourselves—that is a novel and ambitious enterprise that would seem to demand nothing less than a radical reformation of humanity, and perhaps the suppression of politics as a form of human activity as well.

Why do the contributors to Mr. Laslett's volume perform like a group of nannies determined to hush the children? Why do they try to make the deepest problems of morals and politics *unmentionable*? The most plausible explanation, it seems to me, is that they reject the questions of political and moral philosophy because, in their heart of hearts, they feel that while such questions might occur to foreigners, they ought never to occur to well-adjusted Englishmen. Throughout their essays there runs the crucial assumption that the problems of political philosophy have been contrived by political philosophers, and that they would never occur to normal, sensible people. It is true, certainly, that these questions do grow out of the kind of extreme situations which English life has not experienced for many years; but such situations are not unknown to English history, and—the English not being providentially exempt from the inevitable caprices of fate—will doubtless arise again in the future. So long as events run placidly along, one is spared all doubt and anguish about the political obligations of a citizen, or the moral obligations of a state. But one is also denied the insight and illumination that can only come from a consideration of extremes. And sooner or later one is tempted to indulge in the magical belief that so long as one avoids all doubt and anguish, so long as one turns one's eye away from the extreme, events will run placidly along and the extreme will never be more than a bad dream. The contributors to Mr. Laslett's volume give the impression of being convinced that, if only those horrid questions are not permitted to be asked, then England will remain uncontaminated by the outrageous perplexities that less fortunate races let themselves in for, and this little island will be able to float peacefully in its blessed ignorance. That is why I called it a philosophy for little England—an idyllic little England which, I emphasised, did not really exist outside their imagination.

Irving Kristol

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MR. WILSON'S OUTSIDER

DR. JOHNSON said of "a woman's preaching" that it "is like a dog's walking on his hinder legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all." It is in much the same spirit that most of its critics have welcomed Mr. Wilson's book.* It is not well written: its thesis is not new: its argument is often confused. But Mr. Wilson is only twenty-four years old: he has had no philosophical training: and look at all the books that he has read. This attitude seems to me to be frivolous, and indeed unjust to Mr. Wilson. His book is not very good, but it is serious; and it deserves to be assessed on its own merits. I assume Mr. Wilson would himself prefer this to receiving compliments upon his youth.

The purpose of the book is to describe and gain sympathy for a standpoint which is said to be that of the Outsider: the method is that of illustration by examples. As outsiders in life, Mr. Wilson instances Van Gogh, T. E. Lawrence, Nijinski, and the Quaker George Fox. From fiction he takes the heroes of Barbusse's *L'Enfer*, Sartre's *La Nausée*, Camus's *L'Etranger*, and Harley Granville-Barker's play *The Secret Life*, together with various characters from Dostoevsky's novels, notably *The Possessed* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, and from the novels of a contemporary Swiss writer, Hermann Hesse. I confess that I have not read the works of Hermann Hesse, and Mr. Wilson's painstaking analysis of them does not attract me to them, but as a source of examples they seem to serve him well. For further illustrations and occasionally for argument he draws on writers so various as Hemingway, Kafka, T. S. Eliot, H. G. Wells with his *Mind at the End of its Tether*, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Tolstoy, James Joyce, Henry James, William James, Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, Hawthorne, Blake, Henry Miller, Thomas Mann, Yeats, Traherne, Gurdjieff, Sri Ramakrishna, and George Bernard Shaw. There may even be others that I have not noted. If the publishers' avowed enthusiasm for the book had carried them to the length of providing it with an index, it would be easier to tell.

This multiplicity of sources reveals the extent of Mr. Wilson's reading, but it makes his concept of the Outsider annoyingly protean. He would have done better to forgo some of his literary parade and try to show much more precisely what he took the essential characteristics of the Outsider to be. As it is, he gives us various indications which do not make an entirely coherent picture. Thus at one point we are told that for a man to be an Outsider it is sufficient that he be "interested to know *how* he should live instead of merely taking life as it comes." But this makes a great many of us into Outsiders. Though Mr. Wilson assumes, apparently on *a priori* grounds, that the great mass of people, the despised *bourgeoisie*, who work at regular jobs, are living the lives of automata, I have no doubt that if one could undertake the research one would find that it was not at all uncommon for them to be interested in the question how they should live. The trouble is that the condition of their lives does not in most cases afford them a very wide range of choice.

A MUCH narrower conception of the Outsider, which Mr. Wilson also puts forward, is that he is one who is in the melancholy position of being uncertain about his own identity: and again, it is made a reproach to the *bourgeoisie*, a proof of their philistinism, that they know who they are. Alternatively, the Outsider may be one to whom the world seems alien because he can find no meaning in it. His interest in the question how he should live is frustrated by the very nature of the world in which he finds himself. If he does not come to terms with life, and his doing so is regarded by Mr. Wilson as something of a betrayal, an outsider of this type is often brought to madness or suicide. Otherwise, he may remain in a state of hebetude. It would seem from the general tenor of his book that this is the version of the Outsider that Mr. Wilson is primarily concerned with. The theme is one that the existentialists

* *The Outsider*. By COLIN WILSON. Gollancz. 21s.

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JONATHAN CAPE

have made familiar. The best exposition of it that is known to me is to be found in Camus's *Le Mythe de Sisyphe.* Camus's "absurd man" is Mr. Wilson's Outsider, set in a sharper light. I am rather surprised that Mr. Wilson, in all the display that he makes of his authorities, allows himself only a brief and rather slighting reference to this book.

It is one of Camus's merits that he makes it clear that there can be no solution to his Outsider's problem. His conditions could not conceivably be met, since he will be content with nothing less than what is logically impossible. The proper conclusion, then, is not that life has no meaning, for this implies that it lacks a meaning that it might have had, but that it has whatever meaning one succeeds in putting into it. And here the Outsider is not in a privileged position. It is his misfortune that he is less easily satisfied than other men; in the extreme example, which Camus describes, it may be even that he cannot possibly be satisfied in any way at all: but it does not follow that his satisfaction, if he were to find it, would be superior to that which he disdains. Mr. Wilson implies that it would be superior if it were obtained through some form of religious mysticism. He suggests that the true solution to the Outsider's problem may be found in the development of his religious sense. And perhaps for some such men it is. But this does not put them in the right, or the rest of us in the wrong. I am sure that mystical experiences are very well worth having, but so are many other things. What is quite unwarranted is the assumption, which Mr. Wilson is disposed to make, that the world that the mystic inhabits is somehow objectively more "real" than the world of common sense.

Mr. Wilson's non-conformism is sympathetic. He does well to attack the complacency with which he finds himself surrounded. We need to be reminded that our accepted social values are not unquestionable. But what does he propose to put in their place? He does not wholly commit himself, but he gives signs that he would opt for the ideal of the Nietzschean superman; his admiration for Shaw seems based upon this most tiresome aspect of his work. Thus he cites with approval Nietzsche's ecstatic reactions to the spectacle of some Prussian cavalry, which convinced him that "life does not lie in the puny struggle to exist, but in the Will to war, the Will to power." Mr. Wilson also is given to spelling "will" with a capital W. For my own part, I think that what Lytton Strachey said of Carlyle applies very well to Nietzsche, that he "evolved a kind of super-morality by which all the most unpleasant qualities of human nature—egotism, insensitiveness, love of power—become the object of his religious adoration—a monstrous and in-

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verted ethic, combining every possible disadvantage of virtue and of vice." I hope that Mr. Wilson does not really mean to recommend this to us. I hope also that he does not think that there is anything exceptionally meritorious in constantly brooding over the state of one's own soul.

Some of his *obiter dicta* are rather strange. He refers to causality as "Hume's bugbear," as if Hume had tried to do away with it, and talks of Freud's "inadequate psychology," with the implication that human behaviour ought not to be scientifically explicable. He says that "the belief that everything is infinite is an *existential* truth not accessible to reason." But what does he understand by the proposition that "everything is infinite"? And if it is inaccessible to his reason what possible ground can he have for believing it to be true? Again we are told that "If man were entirely body or emotions, he would have no conception of his identity, consequently he could never become unbalanced like Nijinsky, Lawrence, Van Gogh." I suppose that if man were entirely body or emotions, in the sense apparently intended, he would have no conception of anything at all. Another remark which puzzles me is that "Evolution towards God is impossible without a Fall." Surely Mr. Wilson does not wish to be an advocate of the doctrine of Original Sin?

But perhaps he does. It may be part of his religiosity, and I suspect that it is to his religiosity, even more than to his youth, that Mr. Wilson chiefly owes the reputation that he has made with this book. Whatever doubts people may feel about the orthodox forms of Christianity, they still respond very favourably to any suggestion that the world escape the clutches of science, that "there are more things in Heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy." And very likely there are: but I think that the philosopher does well to say with Nelson Goodman: "I am concerned rather that there should not be more things dreamt of in my philosophy than there are in heaven or earth."

A. J. Ayer

EUROPE'S UNDERGROUND

THERE seems to be something about the very act of looking backward, whether upon our own lives or upon the history of the human race in general, that provokes a bad conscience. "Where did we go wrong?" we inevitably ask. All kinds of explanations have been offered for this bad conscience, from the theological to the psychoanalytical. But I would suggest that what is behind it is the fact that every specific form of existence means an infinite number of possibilities denied; and that it is these possibilities which haunt us, almost as if they were lost opportunities. This they never really were, of course, for it is only in retrospect that they appear as opportunities at all. Nevertheless, the sentiment is not to be avoided: through everything that is, there runs a thrill of nostalgia for everything that is not.

It is this primary experience that may explain why the melancholic theories of human history most happily survive the moment of their composition. Think of the philosophers of history who are still readable today: how many are the cheerful among them? Condorcet and Comte are names in textbooks, while Vico and Burckhardt are being perpetually rediscovered. *The Outline of History* is moving toward oblivion; *The Decline of the West* is still regularly reprinted. Of the hundreds of books that celebrated "the sexual revolution of our times," can anyone offhand recall a title? Meanwhile, here is a new edition of Denis de Rougemont's *Passion and Society*,* still every bit as fascinating, provocative, and intellectually pleasing as it was fifteen years ago, and as it will be (one is certain) many years hence.

"MY LORDS, if you would hear a high tale of love and death...." This opening line of Bédier's *Tristan*, which is also the opening line of M. de Rougemont's book, plunges us at once into "the myth that has been agitating us for eight hundred years as spell, terror, or ideal" —the myth of passionate, romantic love which is the guiding theme of Western literature and, in a more esoteric way, the dynamic within Western history. Whenever we try to locate the

* *Passion and Society*. By DENIS DE ROUGEMONT. Translated from the French by Montgomery Belgion. Faber. 25s. The original French title, *L'Amour dans l'Occident*, has been preserved in the American edition as *Love in the Western World*. Why has the British publisher shunned it?

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distinctive and unique feature of Western thought, as against either its classical ancestors or Oriental contemporaries, we are drawn to this erotic-Utopian temper of the Western imagination, seeking within the temporal order an impossible fulfilment beyond all natural and limiting conditions, yearning for a transcendence that would simultaneously deny and transfigure all material reality, at one and the same time creative and self-destructive.

The origins of this myth are as obscure as its ultimate destiny. It is tantalising obscurity, for we have all the parts of what seems to be an explanation but have no evidence that these parts really belong to the same puzzle: they fit, but that might be a misleading accident. We do know that the myth arose among the troubadours of medieval Provence; nor can there be any doubt that its appearance constituted a revolutionary break. As Mr. C. S. Lewis has written in *The Allegory of Love* (a book which, oddly, M. de Rougemont does not mention): "Compared with [this transformation of the erotic imagination] the Renaissance is a mere ripple on the stream of literature.... Real changes in human sentiment are very rare—there are perhaps three or four on record—but I believe that they occur, and that this is one of them." We also know that, at more or less the same time, medieval Europe was invaded by Manichæan-Catharist heresies coming from the Near East; and these heresies, in their denial of the sacrament of marriage and of the sacramental character of Christianity in general, in their hatred of the flesh and their worship of a Feminine Godhead, in their glorification of death and mortification of life (including, perhaps, the practice of sexual obscenities)—in all these themes they provided a metaphysical fundament for the new sensibility of the troubadours. But was there in fact a connection? M. de Rougemont argues that there was, and the seeming perversity of his thesis—that our romantic love is really a way of rejecting the material and created world in favour of the infinite and uncreated—has shocked the academics while intriguing the general public. Of what, technically speaking, can be considered historical evidence, there is very little either for or against. In this new and revised edition of his book, M. de Rougemont has gathered together all the new data that scholars have turned up; and he answers the arguments that have been directed against him. Having been entirely persuaded by M. de Rougemont in the first place, I am naturally even more firmly persuaded in the second. It is not, however, his arguments that move me, so much as his insight. Once he has pointed to the essential quality of romantic love, it is our own romantic imagination that rises to recognise and salute itself. Such self-recognition is far more definitive and unanswerable than any number of scholarly references.

It is this shock of self-recognition that travels in a chain-reaction throughout the chapters of *Passion and Society*—from the discussion of *Tristan and Iseult* through Petrarch, Racine, the Don Juan myth, German Romanticism, Stendhal, Wagner, the transformation of the rules of warfare, the crisis of modern marriage. M. de Rougemont is a brilliant moralist and literary critic. Which is to say, he evokes an immediate assent: he takes up a familiar theme on a text which we thought we understood, and easily demonstrates that our understanding of it was even greater than we consciously knew. The only half-exception I would make to this generalisation is in his concluding remarks on marriage, where he takes a rather belligerently Christian position and indulges his nostalgia for the choices that Western civilisation did not make. What he says about the inherent absurdity of trying to reconcile romantic love with Christian marriage, and about the even greater absurdity of founding Christian marriage upon romantic love, is cogent and convincing. But that Christian marriage itself can legitimately establish itself as the criterion, against which all other relations are measured for shortcomings; that Christian love (*agape*: the love of the other as a fellow creature) is the norm from which passionate love (*eros*: the love that destroys all selves because it scorns the limits of the created world) is a deviation—this will not be so readily assumed by those who do not share M. de Rougemont's Christian faith.

Above all, the virtue of a book like *Passion and Society* is its power to make us realise how little we understand this Western civilisation we talk so much about. We think of it as being somehow coeval with time itself, whereas only sixty-six generations of men have been born since Jesus died, and the way we divide these generations and assign to them their dominant aspects ("the age of faith," "the age of enlightenment," etc.) is ludicrously arbitrary and deceptive. The "middle ages" (itself a modern myth, invented by "scientific" historians who were apocalyptically certain that theirs was the final age) was, as M. de Rougemont makes clear, an age of many faiths, and most of them had no friendly connection with the Catholic Church. The Christian character of our civilisation is something largely manufactured by tendentious scholars; it has been a veneer, beneath which the real history of Europe took—and is taking—place. So far as the study of European history goes, we are still at the pre-Freudian stage: only

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the surface "evolution" of character engages our attention, while the repressed is equated to the non-existent. It is a matter for speculation whether the messianic Joachim of Flora or the dogmatic Thomas of Aquinas had a more profound influence on the course of Western history; but Joachim is fortunate to receive a passing mention in our history books. We all know about medieval cathedrals—what do we know of the mass movements of medieval flagellomania? And what can one know of modern science who knows nothing of the Pythagorean *mystique* in which it was rooted? Manichæans, gnostics, Albigensians, Beghards, Flagellants, Brethren of the Spirit, "libertines," alchemists, Rosicrucians, epicureans, Cabbalists, communists, freemasons, nihilists—all these constitute the moving eddies and whirlpools within the underground canals of European history, constantly erupting and overflowing the respectable scenery of the guidebooks, both polluting and fertilising it. It is only in recent decades that serious scholars, as distinct from treasure-hunting cranks, have begun to explore this subterranean area. Among them, M. de Rougemont is a notable pioneer.

Irving Kristol

THE GREAT CAPTAINS

MR. TREECE is not the only novelist who has recently been attracted by the Roman breakdown;* Bryher, for instance, has dealt with it in a Swiss setting. The attraction is not surprising. If one were to classify literary epochs according to the kind of landscape by which each is obsessed, ours might well be called the Age of the Utter Ruin. Ruins have made an imaginative appeal before—in the 18th century, for example—but hitherto as a picturesque element. The relic of the past, crumbling tower or fragment of aqueduct, stood in the midst of a prosperous and civilised present as if to congratulate it upon being so superior in its peace and common sense to the bad old days. But our ruins are not at all like this. They must occupy the whole scene—overgrown roads, washed-out bridges, rusting machinery, a solitary chimney stack and, encroaching upon them, the wilderness. The virgin wilderness by itself will not do, but the returning wilderness, burying some human enterprise that has failed, some civilisation gone to pot—Ah, how our imaginations respond to that! And almost as fascinating to us is the image of the Threatened City. At the moment it is a going concern, people are happy, there is love, comfort, entertainment, money, but, just beyond the horizon, some "rough beast" is already slouching to be born. My, how delicious that is!

Whatever this may indicate about our psychological and social health, this is what we enjoy and we must be grateful to writers like Mr. Treece whose historical novel about Arthur, or Artos as he calls him, is generously crammed with such images.

His choice of hero was felicitous for two reasons. Firstly, because, while there almost certainly was such a person, the demonstrable historical facts are very scanty and his imaginative invention has a free hand. He can with good conscience have Aelle slain at the battle of Dubglass and Cerdic besieged on Mount Badon. Secondly, though little can be known about the historical Artos, everybody knows a great deal about the King Arthur of the Medieval romances culminating in the work of Malory.

This gives Mr. Treece an extra command upon the interest of his readers who at every moment can contrast what he suggests may have actually occurred with the story told by Malory who never claimed to be writing about anything but an imaginary world. *The Great Captains* is a polemic as well as an exciting narrative; indirectly, by implication, Mr. Treece attacks, not Malory's historical veracity, but the *ethos* of his imaginary world, the code of Knightly Chivalry and Courtly Love which (with suitable bowdlerisation) was held up by schoolmasters as an ideal of conduct as late as my own childhood.

Mr. Treece, for example, retains the theme of unwitting incest, but he makes Gwynhwyfer instead of Morgause the sister of Artos. Instead of a Queen he gives Artos a "hand-fast wife," a beautiful dancer called Lystra (from Byzantium, natch), who, for political reasons, is about to have an affair with Medrawt when they are both surprised by Artos who takes a terrible revenge.

* *The Great Captains*. By HENRY TREECE. Bodley Head. 13s. 6d.

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The entire elimination of the Launcelot–Guinevere theme is significant for, after removing the medieval trappings of the Noble Adultery, there was no historical reason which could forbid Mr. Treece, had he wished, to describe a passionate infidelity. That the avoidance was deliberate is born out by his version of the other great myth of Passion.

Artos sat in his hide tent with Bedwyr and a young lieutenant named Drostan, a relative of Marcus of Cornwall. He was a foolishly gay youngster, who invented dreams which he said he had dreamt, just to cause amusement.... Drostan told of a lovely golden-haired girl from Ireland, Yslod, he called her. He said that his Uncle Marcus, in his dream, of course, asked him to sail across to Ireland and fetch this lovely creature back for him to marry.

"But, alas, you know how it is," said Drostan, raising his auburn eyebrows nonchalantly, "she just couldn't resist me! Before we had got back in sight of the cliffs of Cornwall, the job was done! I felt very bad about betraying old uncle Marcus, but who could have disappointed a lady as beautiful, and as insistent, as she was?"

Again, in his portrait of Artos himself, it was not, I think, merely a gloss in Nennius but also a wish to contradict Malory at every point which led Mr. Treece to reject the possibility of his having been a fairly educated Romano-Briton from the lowland zone, and choose instead to make him a savage Celt.

The ploughman stopped once more and stood still to wait for Medrodus. He was tall and barrel-chested; so heavily developed were the muscles of his shoulders that he looked at first sight almost hunchbacked. His broad face glistened in the sunlight with sweat, which he wiped away from time to time with the back of a large and calloused hand. His sandy hair was chopped off at the nape of the neck, in the old barbarian style, but hung in two small plaits, one from each temple, almost hiding the heavy gold rings which dangled from his ears.... The man's face showed no emotion, no recognition. It was as impassive as a rough-hewn block of sandstone—and rough-hewn it was indeed, for below the unblinking pale blue eyes, the cheek-bones were raised by thick horizontal ridges, the result of some ritual surgery into which blue dyes had been rubbed, giving the broad face an inexpressibly savage look.

LASTLY, one would gather from reading *The Great Captains* that by the last decade of the fifth century, Christianity had ceased to be an organised cult. A few might remember a Christian prayer or even try out the Holy Cross as a battle-cry, but the only rites one hears of as being practised are all pagan ones. From a novelist's point of view, pagan rites are, of course, much more fun and Merddin, "the lost one, the maker of dreams," more exciting than a holy hermit, but it is strange that Mr. Treece's description of Medrawt's encounter with Merddin is the only passage in his book where the reader cannot tell whether the author is saying what he thinks happened or saying what he thinks one of his characters thinks happened. This is all the stranger because his normal attitude to the romantically odd is as no-nonsense as possible; witness his account of the founding of the Round Table.

Artos sat and smiled at them strangely. He watched Aurelius spurring on to gain the gap before Bedwyr, and Cei anxious not to be the last.

Then Artos gave a great shout and said, "Between God and myself, but this is more like a maiden's corn-dance than a meeting of great Captains! Each one anxious to be first, afraid to be last!" ... he reached down at his side and unhooked the great round bronze buckler that swung from his pommel-horn. He took it firmly by its embossed edge and flung it away from him, so that it lay, its round boss uppermost, in the heather. The horsemen looked at him, wondering.

He beckoned to them then. "Come," he said gently, as though to backward children. "Sit on your chargers round this shield."

The men obeyed him, for his voice was one of command. And when they were disposed about the great buckler, he turned to them and said, "Now, at this table, who holds the place of honour?"

They looked down at the shield and then up at the dux bellorum. *"Why," said Votiporix, "there is no place of honour. All places are the same, round a shield."*

Artos smiled at him and said, "Exactly so, King of the Demetae." Then, with a swift movement, he leaned low out of the saddle, took up his buckler, and without another word, rode through the gap.

In a novel which only claims to present one out of many possible re-creations of the past, a bias of sensibility, so long as it is kept, as Mr. Treece keeps his, in bounds, is all to the good.

If I say that *The Great Captains* reminds me of a movie script, I mean this as high praise. Whatever scene Mr. Treece puts before us—a battle, a hunt, a journey, a council, a ritual dance —we are made to see it in all its concrete, visual

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details of forms and movements; the contrast of scene against scene, their timing, and the management of tension and relaxation are so expert, that the reader's attention is never lost for a second. As in a good movie, too, the characters are, most of them, archetypal figures—The Wise Ancient, the blue-eyed Noble Savage from the country versus his brown-eyed Brother and Rival from the slums, the Blonde Virgin versus the Brunette Harlot, etc., which in a narrative where the main interest is epic action, is right and proper.

The only character whom Mr. Treece presents subjectively is Medrawt. I find it a little odd, I must say, that he should tell us in his preface, "Looking at the problem from a number of directions, I sympathise with Medrawt, who has had a poor defence in the Court of History," for the Medrawt he gives us is one of the most detestable characters in fiction, a really horrid little toad. Dreadful as is his fate, one cannot feel it is undeserved.

As one might expect, in this rip-roaring melodrama everyone, but everyone, comes to a sticky end.

Ambrosius: Stabbed in his bath by Medrawt, his ward.
Artos: Stabbed by Medrawt, his blood-brother, in a fit of madness.
Medrawt: Castrated by Cissa. Killed by Bedwyr.
Bedwyr: Clubbed to death by the London mob.
Cei: Poisoned by a Caerwent innkeeper.
Uther Pendragon: Poisoned by Gwynhwyfer, his daughter, on order from Artos, his son.
Gwynhwyfer: Accidentally trampled to death by Artos, her brother and lover.
Anir, their son: Accidentally trampled to death by Artos.
Troynt, her dog: Killed by Artos.
Lystra: Gored to death by a bull in the arena at Caerlon.

HAVING first read *The Great Captains* in the American edition, I am surprised and shocked to discover that the whole penultimate chapter has been omitted from the English edition.

This chapter tells how, after escaping half-dead from the fight in the amphitheatre, Medrawt is found by a woman belonging to a primitive tribe of shore scavengers. He does not die but his wits are gone and he is now subject to fits in which he speaks in a strange tongue which the tribe take to be the voice of Merddin, so that they adopt him as a sort of shaman.

Incapable of recognising others, he wanders one night into a hut where is sitting Cissa, the Saxon whose kinsfolk he had blinded after the battle of Bassas.

They recognise him and castrate him. In the morning he is found by Cerdic who takes charge of him for the reasons given in the last chapter.

I can only suppose that the British publisher objected to the castration and can only say that Mr. Treece's description seemed perfectly discreet to me. The omission of the chapter spoils the pace—without it we are hurried on to the last years of Artos too quickly—and the account of Medrawt's "voices" which it gives prepares us for his sudden turning upon Artos, which is hard to understand without such a preparation.

The Great Captains is one of those books which one cannot put down until one has finished it. It is also a book that one is glad to re-read. These two qualities are not always found in the same book and Mr. Treece is greatly to be congratulated.

W. H. Auden

THE ASIAN REVOLUTION

ONLY a few years ago, the revolutionary ferment in Asia, and in the underdeveloped and formerly dependent countries of the world in general, was interpreted by most Western students almost exclusively in terms of "Nationalism." It followed that all the West had to do to prevent these countries from "going Communist" was to respect their national independence, to back the new nationalist forces against the risk of Communist military aggression from outside or against guerrilla war and *coups d'état* from within, and to grant economic and military aid to its new friends.

Today this complacent picture has largely dissolved under the double impact of Asian neutralism and Asian economic and social problems. It is coming to be recognised that in the Asian revolution of our day, the struggle for national independence is inextricably mixed up with the struggle to build up modern state administrations, modern industries, and modern popular attitudes in political and economic

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FIRE IN HEAVEN

DANNIE ABSE

Fire in Heaven was performed at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in November 1952. Roy Walker reviewing it wrote: "To broadcast it would be rather like proposing to introduce a time-bomb into a respectable game of bowls. *Fire in Heaven* is a Judgement Day of the imagination . . . it has humanity and tenderness. In it, the poetry has not been merely used for decorative purposes."
8s. 6d.

HUTCHINSON

life—that the process of national liberation is inseparable from the attempt to achieve thoroughgoing transformations of society at a revolutionary pace. In this process, the Communists enjoy the double advantage that they can ride the tides of anti-Western feeling, and that they possess a ready-made model for achieving the rapid modernisation of a poor and backward country—at a price. Hence, the chance of preventing the new nations of Asia from falling under Communist control is now seen to depend, first, on the emergence of indigenous progressive élites leading their own movements for social revolution or thoroughgoing reform, and second, on the readiness of the West to trust such movements even where they come into conflict with traditional Western privileges, and to give them generous economic support without political strings.

In the broadest sense, this approach to the Asian revolution is the common basis for both these books on "Nationalism and Communism."* But they not only deal with different regions; they do so in a very different spirit. Professor Macmahon Ball combines a skilful summing up of familiar information on the countries of Eastern and Southern Asia with the equally skilful, but no less familiar, presentation of the left-wing case against Western and particularly American policy in that area; his book is original only in its omissions, some of which are extraordinary. Mr. Laqueur, on the other hand, puts forward a new thesis about the relation of Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East—more particularly the Arab Middle East—as well as a pioneering study of the history of Middle Eastern Communism. To the English-reading specialist, he offers a wealth of source material which was hitherto available only in Arabic, Hebrew, Yiddish, or at best Russian, and then often in the form of obscure underground leaflets and party circulars. As a non-specialist, I only wish that Mr. Laqueur's interpretation would emerge somewhat more boldly from the luxuriant undergrowth of documentary detail.

IT SEEMS to me that the really striking difference of the revolutionary process in the Middle East from that in East Asia is the comparative weakness of mass pressure from below; the intelligentsia appears not only as the leading force of the revolutionary movement, as everywhere in Asia, but almost as its only force. There is nothing remotely comparable to the tradition of peasant risings in East Asia, nothing that would appear to lend itself to Communist partisan tactics; even the masses of destitute refugees from Palestine have not furnished a reservoir for any more persistent form of revolutionary activity than occasional demonstrations and outbreaks. The comparative ease with which the few mass organisations ever created in the area—the Wafd and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Communist-run Tudeh in Persia—were suppressed seems to point to the same basic condition of mass passivity, possibly due to the authoritarian teaching of Islam.

In terms of Middle Eastern history in general, this condition has spelt the weakness of democratic forces and the hollowness of parliamentary régimes. But in terms of Communist history in the area, it has meant that the Communists have been infinitely more successful in periods of "popular" or "national" front policies than whenever they tried to rely on the "class struggle" of workers and peasants. In an overwhelmingly agricultural population, Communist peasant organisations—there are some in Syria and the Sudan—are exceptional; the Communists have created or controlled a number of trade unions, mostly of a highly unstable type, and have conducted strikes, but by themselves

* *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East*. By WALTER Z. LAQUEUR. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London. 32s. *Nationalism and Communism in East Asia*. By W. MACMAHON BALL. Melbourne University Press. 30s.

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these activities have hardly ever gained national significance. By contrast, their wartime "anti-fascist leagues" were important, and their post-war "peace movements" in some cases really powerful influences—rallying points for an intelligentsia that had broken loose from its traditional Islamic moorings and stood in opposition to the old land-owning upper class.

At this point, Mr. Laqueur's central observation comes in. He blames the lack of true political progress in the area, as distinct from aimless ferment and instability, on the peculiarly negative nature of the nationalism of the Arab intelligentsia, which even after the achievement of independence seems to have shown an extraordinary dearth of constructive ideas and programmes for reform. Instead, a combination of anti-Western resentment with a belief in modernisation by authoritarian methods as the quick road to national and individual power has been characteristic of its ideology; and from such a viewpoint, the differences between Fascism, Nazism, and Communism must appear unimportant compared with their alluring affinities. Mr. Laqueur produces an impressive list of both secular-fascist and reactionary Islamic groups and leaders who, having sympathised with Mussolini and Hitler in their time, gradually switched their international hopes to the Soviet Union after 1943—without any change in their basic ideas—and were gladly accepted by the Communists as partners for a "national front."

The attraction of Communism in the Arab Middle East, then, would appear to rest on its similarities with fascism rather than on its revolutionary aspects, on its links with an anti-Western great power and its technique of the "revolution from above" rather than on its appeal to the poor and the downtrodden. Its chances of coming to power would be those of the "peaceful road"—of nationalist coalitions pledged to co-operation with Russia, in which the Communists would gradually take control thanks to their superior discipline, clearer programme, and Soviet backing. Mr. Laqueur himself judges these chances cautiously, but the reader who follows his argument comes to feel that they must be rather high, provided there are no rival indigenous élites with a reform programme of their own. But is that so?

The answer must clearly depend on our view of the character and prospects of Colonel Nasser's officers' group in Egypt, and of similar military groups in other Islamic countries. Where the cultural attitudes of a modern Western society are lacking, a modern army is always easier to create than any other modern institution, and its élites may at times show an integrity and responsibility far superior to that of other groups of the "intelligentsia," such as lawyer-politicians. Colonel Nasser has certainly allowed himself to be diverted from his original programme of reform into imperialist ambitions which are out of all proportion to Egypt's strength, and he has spectacularly failed so far to create an organised political movement; but for all that it would be premature to say that he has become incapable of creating a modern state. If his anti-Western chauvinism leads him into defeat or dependence on the Soviet bloc, the field in the Middle East may well become clear for the kind of fascist-Communist coalition Mr. Laqueur describes. If he—or others of his type—find their way back in time to a concentration on internal reform on the "Kemalist" model, the alternative would still be there. But it is hardly a promising outlook.

BY COMPARISON, the East Asian situation looks more hopeful just because there are true revolutionary mass movements in that area, though one might not get such an optimistic impression from Professor Ball's book. His modest statement that he is not an expert on any one of the countries, ranging from Japan to India, which his slim volume covers, is doubly misleading: he evidently knows a great deal about the whole area, but he does know remarkably little about Communism. The chapter on China, which ought to have been the focus of the book, is pitifully sketchy; he accepts the early tactical assurance of the Communists that collectivisation would take place on a voluntary basis only, and fails—in a new and revised edition published in 1956—to take note of the collectivisation drive started by Mao last summer, an event which is transforming the face of Asia's largest and most powerful country at an ultra-Stalinist pace. He also argues that in countries without a democratic tradition, Communism implies no loss of freedom but on the contrary means increased mass participation in local government, and he shows complete unawareness of the impact of modern "brainwashing" techniques. And he discusses the creation of SEATO and the growth of Asian neutralism without suggesting that China's emergence as the only major military power in Asia may have had some influence on both.

I am not meaning to imply that Professor Ball is in any sense a fellow-traveller; his sympathetic account of the efforts of the Burmese government to carry through its own reform programme in the face of Communist guerrilla warfare would alone be sufficient to refute any such thought. He is honestly anxious to support progressive rivals to Soviet Communism (he plainly underestimates the international importance of the Chinese variety), and I find myself in sympathy with a number of his criticisms of Western policy. The trouble is merely that while

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he is leaning over backwards to be fair to the Communists, he is less careful where his own side is concerned: this 1956 revised edition discusses the Philippines without any account of the Magsaysay reforms, Malaya without the elections and the formation of the Tengku's government, Indo-China without the consolidation of the South and the mass flight from the North that took place after Geneva; yet it leaves in all the criticisms and generalisations based on the previous state of affairs. For an appreciation of the real prospects of non-Communist alternatives in this vast area it is therefore useless.

Richard Lowenthal

THE LETTERS OF D. H. LAWRENCE

NINETEEN-THIRTY-TWO was the year of the first publication of Lawrence's letters, edited by Aldous Huxley with an introduction which was very illuminating at that time and which still seems true and just. This seemed a great and revealing book in 1932 and it still seems so now*: but in a rather different way. The letters themselves, which have something of the energy of Byron's, do not fade or lose their force; but the circumstances surrounding them have changed. In 1932 Lawrence was read with enthusiasm by his admirers but irritably rejected by others as portentous and unreadable, as being a personality rather than a great novelist. There was then little detached, critical understanding of his intentions and achievements as a writer. The usual question among my contemporaries was, "Can you read him or not?"—as if this was a matter either of addiction or of distaste. But now he is liable to be smothered by critical understanding, and to be read, with almost excessive detachment, as an established figure of English literature, a link in the chain of tradition. Yet of all the writers of his time he loses most if he is placed on a literary pedestal; for the surface of his writing will not by itself attract the common reader in each generation, as Joyce and Virginia Woolf almost certainly will. The question is: Have his novels and stories still kept their power to excite and to disturb, now that the first impact of them is no longer felt? I think that they have and that the *Letters* help to explain why. Plainly much of his thought and imagination were concentrated on the condition of England, on the coal-mines, the relation between classes, the national feelings, and the intellectual movements of his own particular time. The *Letters* vividly recall a whole period, the period of Georgian poetry and of the translations of the great Russian novels, the Home Front in the war, and after the war, the England of the economic scramble, of ribbon development in the new suburbs, the General Strike, of unemployment, and the feverishness of Weimar Germany. Part of Lawrence's correspondence records his contemptuous withdrawal from all this, often living abroad, more or less isolated. But he did not succeed in forgetting, and he constantly returns to the old subjects. Memories of his youth in Nottinghamshire enter into one of the most vivid of all the letters. He was an intensely topical writer. But beyond the historical relevance, both of his letters and of his fiction, there is a deeper and more general theme which runs through all his fiction and poetry. This is his philosophy, his theory of human nature, and it is repeatedly explained in his *Letters*.

THERE has been a great variety of Christian opinion, and various degrees of unbelief, among great English novelists. Some, like Hardy and Joyce, have in their different ways painfully contended with belief and unbelief in their writings. But their repudiations of ordinary religious opinion were of a kind already familiar and recognised among the public which they were addressing. Others, like Henry James, would never have thought of stepping outside the structure of society as they found it and of questioning its more remote moral foundations. On the contrary, their whole purpose was to show the play of passion and situation, or of character and situation, within the accepted framework of morality, and under its pressures. Any conflict of moralities in their work falls within accepted standards. When in English fiction the whole structure of existing society has been challenged, or, as in *Wuthering Heights*, ignored, it has generally been in the spirit of romanticism, as a form of romantic individualism or poetic dream, with no definite philosophical assertion behind it. The peculiarity of

* *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*. With an introduction by Aldous Huxley. Heinemann. 30s.

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Lawrence is that in his best writing he tried to undermine not only Christian attitudes, but also the easy scepticism of rational men in a half-Christian society, and to do this without retreating into romantic imaginations, or into mere social comedy or satire. While depicting shrewdly and accurately the society in which he lived, he succeeded in taking the reader outside all the semi-Christian and rational attitudes recognised in that society; and this he achieved not, like Nietzsche, by rhetoric and an imitation of argument, but by reinterpreting our ordinary awareness of things, and ordinary personal relations, through the inner life of his characters.

Lawrence's heroes and heroines, although living in contemporary England, realise in their moments of freedom that they feel no natural allegiance to any form of life that is conceivable in a competitive, rational society. When they free themselves from pretence, they find that their nature is in revolt, not only against the ideals of bourgeois society, but against modern society as such, whatever form it may take. They do not want to be social men at all. They come to life only outside all social pressures, within a family, in sexual relations, in practising some craft, in peculiarly intimate friendships, and in their perceptions of nature. All these true interests are stunted and distorted in any kind of society which is now possible; for all modern societies are founded on competition and self-assertion, and demand that men should improve themselves and their conditions by unnatural efforts of will. For centuries we have made the gigantic mistake of trying to improve men by organising better the society which forms them. We should abandon altogether this idea of improvement, whether in its Christian or rationalist forms, and start again from the beginning.

For a writer, this means that he must break away from the novel of character and status, which is the main stream of English fiction; this must always be superficial, since it treats men as essentially social beings. Rather he will rewrite human nature, showing men and women trying to detach themselves from the self-assertion and competitiveness which corrupts their relations to each other; in heightened states of consciousness their real nature will appear through the civilised accretions. And this requires a new style in dialogue and description, almost a new form of novel. In the first half of *The Rainbow*, in parts of *Women in Love*, in *The Fox*, and in several short stories, Lawrence finds a way of representing states of consciousness, and particularly perceptions of nature, a new style which does suggest what it would be like to be free from every sense of social necessity, without being a rebel, which is only another form of self-assertion. Particularly in *The Rain-*

The Diaries of John Ruskin 1835-1887

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bow, he succeeds in the almost impossible feat, in which so many writers (even sometimes Tolstoy) have failed, of making naturalness in living, a kind of golden age, seem interesting and moving; therefore its present corruption does, while one reads, seem convincing. And he does this without altogether breaking the conventional form of the novel of contemporary life.

IT IS not therefore surprising that Mr. Eliot was harsh in his criticism of a writer who stands so far outside, not only the Christian tradition, but also outside the complementary tradition of free thought, which is its relatively harmless shadow. Repeatedly in his letters Lawrence dissociates himself from movements for enlightenment and social reform, just because they are movements of social reform, of an organised will for improvement; they are starting at the wrong end. But the total effect of his letters is still not one of eccentricity and retreat, but rather of a man of extraordinary intelligence who carried his critical probing to such lengths that one would expect his own achievements to be fragmentary. His novels, like his plans for new communities, often fall into confusion and uncertainty, and remain at the end incomplete, because he had gone so deep in criticism of society that he had no vision left of how men might live together and be free, unless they are by nature perfectly adjusted; and this is the same as to have no vision at all. At the point of realising this blank, in his letters as in his novels, he begins to thump and bang loudly in the same place in meaningless repetition. Perhaps it is after all possible to be too profound, to undermine in one's own mind every form of organised life; then, as a novelist, one may be driven into empty fantasies, as Lawrence was in some of his later stories.

Lawrence's letters, taken as a whole, are probably among the best that have appeared in English in this century. At every point they throw light on his work, since he was after all a philosophical novelist, who declared his opinions to his friends. And his powers of description, so closely linked to his philosophy, have not often been equalled.

Stuart Hampshire

FOUR PREJUDICED AND UNFAIR REVIEWS

"YOUR prejudiced and unfair reviews," writes a correspondent—anonymous, mercifully. He or she was complaining, or rather being abusive, about a review of Lawrence in which, knowing myself to be perhaps irrationally prejudiced against him, I had been at some pains to set out my prejudices, as far as I could understand them, before embarking on the review proper—modelling myself (*of course*) on Dr. Johnson, who is always most meticulous in this matter and therefore invariably illuminating even where he most signally fails to convince. Her or his comment on this procedure, that my review was "prejudiced," could hardly be news to me therefore, since I had myself stated it, and not much of a discovery for him or her, for the same reason. That it should be "unfair," however, is quite another matter. Surely it is the *failure* to state a detected prejudice that is unfair, and not the opposite? After all, we are all prejudiced. Prejudice indeed, or pre-judging, is an indispensable item of the reviewer's equipment (as, for the matter of that, it is of the common reader's): for it is by the exercise of pre-judgment that he selects from a pile of possibles (the whole number of which, *in extenso*, he could not conceivably make time to read) the half-dozen which he feels will be best, or at least bad in ways which he suspects will be the most interesting. When he comes to read the book, of course, as distinct from selecting it for reading, then he must do his best to put his prejudices behind him; and most honest reviewers, and readers, will admit to occasional drastic errors of pre-judgment in both directions—the ante-post favourites flopping and the dark horses showing unexpected resource. Especially is this last the case, where the style (to which pre-judgment by the method of "sampling" is preponderantly directed) is indifferent, but the construction or characterisation or *Weltanschauung* of a distinguished kind. This month, therefore, the reverse of repentant, I propose to elaborate my prejudices in some detail.

AN absolutely major source of prejudice is, of course, the blurb, which deserves a review to itself, and I hope will one day get it; the blurbs can manage to put one off almost every book ever written. What is particularly annoying is, to put it in an over-simplified way, the confusion between literary and social values. One is almost always invited to admire, as if on purely literary grounds, for what are in fact extra-literary reasons. Sometimes, as in the anthology which I wish to discuss last, the attempted imposition is blatant. More often, as in the blurb to Mr.

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C. H. B. Kitchin's new novel,* the prejudice aroused is more slight and subtle.

"The Secret River" is the story of Harriet Ashworth as a child, an adolescent, and a young woman—of Harriet, and hardly less of her mother, vain, silly, snobbish, and egocentric, yet not entirely unsympathetic....

Why should these apparently innocent phrases promote the faint tingle of unease and despondency? For one thing, I suppose, because Mr. Kitchin is so obviously on to a couple of well-selling lines ("the tremulous sensibility of the lonely adolescent girl drawn with all Mr. X's tenderness and insight"—women readers identify, male readers imaginatively possess; the satirical pot-shot at the sitting target whom even the simplest reader can recognise as a fitting target—though not necessarily as a target the size of a barn door with the barn thrown in); and this nightly show should induce suspicion, though not, of course, as yet condemnation. Then one perceives that, under the guise of being informed of the plot, we are really being invited to admire the subject—not a strictly literary consideration—and this is a confidence-trick of another sort.

So much for the pre-judgment. And post-judgment? Much the same: *The Secret River* is a very decent and competent middle-brow novel, well-made and well-written at that level. It is also free from the prevailing vice of its kind—bogus and windy moralising, and false philosophical premisses tortured into even falser ethical conclusions: its scale of values is sane and civilised and, if it cuts deep at no point, a genuine conventionality lucidly expressed is better than a fake heterodoxy any day.

THE sampling-test on Mr. Constantine Fitz Gibbon's *In Love and War*† induced the expectation that it would prove to be pure pastiche-Waugh, and that the only remarkable thing about it would be the extraordinary faithfulness with which the plagiarism appeared to be conducted. Prejudice against; not because I dislike Mr. Waugh's style, but because I admire it very much—too much to wish to see his manner divorced, as by any borrower it must be, from the intensely personal and individual matter it embodies. Prejudice confirmed by the opening passages—the hero-narrator's school-days:

Others were pansies and talked in high, affected voices. One was expelled for being drunk in class, an unusual offence. . . . During the summer hols I had had an experience. She was a lady-novelist....My father had invited her for a week. Whenever the sun shone she would strip herself naked and lie on the lawn, or sometimes do a little dance to Mozart, played on the portable gramophone...and initiated me, as she put it, into the secrets of Cythera. I found them most enjoyable, though the bed was a bit cramped for that sort of thing.

"No, no," said the interior voice, "professional naughty-man, drawingroom-shocker, veneer of reproduction sophistication overlaying sexy day-dreams that give away more, much more, than author intends." But post-judgment in actual fact largely reversed. In the first place, Mr. Fitz Gibbon made me laugh a lot, and nothing deterges prejudice quite like that. The plot is witty and the texture extremely readable—less, perhaps, because one is drawn on, than because, once started, there is nothing to hold one back, but this is eminently a light novel and none the worse for it. Compared with, say, *Decline and Fall*, it lacks the social satire and it lacks the personal sadness—two of Mr. Waugh's extra dimensions which give him a solidity denied to imitators; but it is funny, and the values are, no less than Mr. Kitchin's,

* *The Secret River*. By C. H. B. KITCHIN. Secker and Warburg. 16s.

† *In Love and War*. By CONSTANTINE FITZ GIBBON. Cassell. 12s. 6d.

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RIDER

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fundamentally sane and decent—though remarkably different! Recommended.

MR. J. R. ACKERLEY's *My Dog Tulip**: prejudices for. Firstly because I know, like, and respect the author personally, and am certain he cannot write badly (this type of "prejudice for," incidentally, I notice my fellow reviewers, a scaly tribe, almost or never admit to). Then, whether I knew him or not, my admiration would always go out to a man who only produces one book every thirty years—the other was *Hindoo Holiday*. Again, who could resist a work recommended by Mr. E. M. Forster in the cagiest phrase ever penned by a G.O.M. anxious not to get his fingers burned: "However much readers dislike or like this book, they will be obliged to agree that it is unlike any other book that they have read"?

It is. Subtitled "Life with an Alsatian," and about just that; but this is not a dear-doggy dog-book, O dear no, it is about what dogs really do get up to, not what their owners would like to think they do. In taming and "civilising" the dog we have unwittingly deprived it of its chief preoccupation in the wild state, the search for food. Consequently it tends to concentrate upon the remaining natural functions of urination, defecation, copulation (the exaggerated sexual life of man may well spring from similar causes). It is upon these three, and especially the last, that Mr. Ackerley principally directs his acute observation; and, having no use for euphemism, he invariably uses the simple word for the simple thing. His main theme is a private discovery as startling as it is simple: that almost all town dogs, of either sex, die virgin. Practically no bitch on heat is ever now loose in the street. Mr. Ackerley's attempts to mate his own bitch Tulip were long-drawn, grotesque, and (on a dog-level) tragic; quite apart from other mishaps, a large number of the males were simply so inexperienced that they didn't know what to do. I think any dog-owner who can stand things being called by their right names should take a look at *My Dog Tulip*: readers of ENCOUNTER may have special reasons for wishing to do so, since one chapter of the book has already appeared in the issue for March 1954.

I should add that, as usual, when a particular is examined with truthful attention, the result is an illumination of the general. What starts out to be a book about dogs ends up as a book about man, his urbanisation, his divorce from the body; the dog is, in this sense, only a bit of himself that he has left behind.

LASTLY, *The Pen in Exile II*,* a second anthology of exiled writers edited by Mr. Paul Tabori. Prejudiced firmly against, because of the confusion of literary and social considerations referred to earlier. *Socially* speaking, humanely speaking, everyone will agree that the lot of the refugee writer, banished not only from the country of his birth but even from the language that he lives by, is a peculiarly tragic one; and that writers of happier countries everywhere should band together to alleviate this lot in so far as it lies in their power. But art is a hard-headed game and knows no excuses; and I am not being merely beastly and caddish if I point out that the tragic fate of the writer is perfectly irrelevant, and it is only the quality of his writing that can concern us.

Some of the contributions are first-rate, often those from unexpected quarters. I was especially struck by *The Cosmic Rhythm*, an exposition of current views on the nature and history of the universe by Mr. Ernst Öpik, an Estonian now working in the Armagh Observatory of Northern Ireland. This seemed to me a perfect piece of scientific popularisation, making difficult notions intelligible to any lay reader with a grasp of basic physics, yet without any of that paraphernalia of marbles, football-fields, and the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral that is usually invoked to obscure a plain arithmetical issue. But for the most part these good writers are swamped by a host of incompetents who have obviously been selected for their personal disasters rather than their literary triumphs. Most of the poetry, in particular, is appalling; the bulk of the translation is patently unflattering, but, even so, there must have been pretty poor stuff in the original. What perhaps strikes the English reader most forcibly about poetry and prose alike is the extreme datedness. Few of these writers seem aware of the developments of world literature; East Europeans write "experimentally" in hundredth-hand Joyce; Estonians, who figure in surprising numbers, are still in the greenery-yallery period. It seems doubtful to me what good the sort of charity implied in collecting and issuing these pieces can really do the writers. Naturally, I hope very much that I am wrong—in any case, mine will probably be the only rasp of dissent in a susurration of lip-service, so will do no damage.

Hilary Corke

* *My Dog Tulip*. By J. R. ACKERLEY. Secker and Warburg. 10s. 6d.

* *The Pen in Exile II*. Edited by PAUL TABORI. International P.E.N. Club Centre. 12s. 6d. (cloth): 9s. 6d. (paper).

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